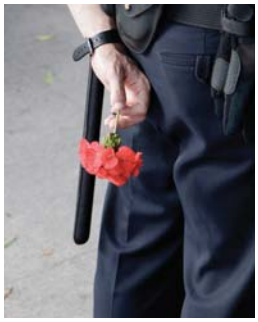
STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY 2013:
Creating an enabling environment

The synthesis report

CIVICUS
World Alliance for Citizen Participation



CIVICUS
World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Our mission:

CIVICUS is an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world.

Our vision:

A worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens engaged in confronting the challenges facing humanity.

About CIVICUS

We're CIVICUS, the only global network dedicated to enhancing the rights, freedoms, health and vitality of civil society as a whole. We've worked for two decades to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world. We have a vision of a global community of active, engaged citizens committed to the creation of a more just and equitable world. We believe a healthy society is one where people have multiple opportunities to participate, come together and express their voices.

We're a membership network, with our alliance encompassing a geographically and thematically diverse, and growing, membership, complemented by a wide range of partnerships with global, regional, national and local civil society organisations (CSOs) and other parts of civil society, and with governments, donors and other institutions.

We work by convening and networking, researching and analysing, generating and sharing knowledge, and communicating, campaigning, influencing and advocating. In everything we do, we partner.

Join our growing alliance

Solutions begin when people rise and join together, and speak up. Solutions advance when active citizens convince those with power to accept responsibility for their social, political and environmental impacts. They endure when government, business and civil society establish permanent institutional arrangements to ensure that we are all empowered when we allocate resources and opportunities.

Today, we have members in more than 100 countries. But we know we have only touched the surface of the inexhaustible reservoir of civic solidarity. We ask you to make us even stronger, so that in turn we can amplify your voice for change.

If you like what you've read in our report, please join us now. If you're concerned about the challenges of the world, if you're involved in a campaign, if you want to make a change, then we invite you to take the next step to help us carry forward the work of building a politics of unity and inclusion.

Become an active global citizen. Add your voice to the global movement for transformational change. Join us: www.civicus.org/join

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Welcome to our – and civil society's – report

Welcome to the second edition of the State of Civil Society report produced by CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

This report is not ours alone. The 2013 State of Civil Society report draws from nearly 50 contributions made by people active in civil society all over the world – from our members, friends, partners, supporters and others in the CIVICUS alliance. They contributed 31 new pieces of analysis and thinking on the state of civil society. Our analysis also benefits from 16 responses to a questionnaire from national civil society platforms that are members of either our Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA), or the International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP). Together, their contributions, published at http://socs.civicus.org, form the full report. Our summary report is a synthesis of this impressive array of perspectives.

We believe that together their contributions offer a body of critical, cutting edge thinking about the changing state of contemporary civil society. We thank them for their efforts and continuing support.

It is also important to acknowledge in this report the work of coalitions such as the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness and BetterAid, and the subsequent CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, in bringing together many CSOs working in the development sphere in recent years to advance the debate on civil society's contributions to development effectiveness, including on the issue of the enabling conditions for civil society that are a necessary part of increasing CSO effectiveness. This report is also intended as a contribution to those wider efforts, in which we at CIVICUS are happy to be active partners.

CIVICUS wishes to express our gratitude to the following contributors, donors, editors, staff and designers.

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Foreword by Cathy Ashton

A vibrant and independent civil society is an essential ingredient of effective and stable democracy. The EU has for many years sought to incorporate the input and views of civil society in its foreign policy.

During my mandate, I have ensured that civil society remains a central pillar of our external relations. Civil society organisations are our partners when advocating for human rights around the globe or designing programmes for women's empowerment. Today, we fund a wide array of NGOs and seek the views of civil society organisations both at headquarters and in the field. On my trips overseas, I meet NGO representatives to hear from them how they see political as well as economic developments on the ground.

In Brussels, I have sought to ensure that the EU engages civil society in a more systematic way; in 2012, European foreign ministers adopted conclusions on Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations, thus renewing EU policy in support of civil society.

It is precisely because of the importance of civil society to European foreign policy that I am growing increasingly concerned about the efforts of some states to bar, constrict, or control the work of NGOs. In too many cases, the voices of civil society are being stifled and the space in which they can express their views is shrinking. This is happening through overt means of oppression such as the implementation of restrictive laws and the persecution of activists, as well by marginalising civil society in national and international decision-making processes.

I commend the environmentalists, lawyers, donors, researchers, academics, activists, political representatives and trade unionists who speak out for the good of their country. For civil society to prosper it needs an enabling environment: institutional structures, laws, policies as well as tolerant societies and resources. In short, a vibrant civil society is a mark of what I call 'deep democracy' – the key to any country's prosperity and peace.

Cathy Ashton
Baroness Ashton of Upholland
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the European Union

Foreword by Jay Naidoo

Let's find our inner fire once more

Citizens always know better than the government or the market what works for them. The question is whether our political and economic elites are prepared to listen. And all of us in civil society should understand that as well, too.

My most important lessons after a life of activism were learnt from marginalised communities and migrant workers living in the most brutal of conditions in mines and factory hostels. Many were illiterate but from them I learnt to listen, to listen carefully and digest their wisdom, which helped me co-create a vision and strategy that eventually became a mighty movement and the pillar of our fight for freedom in South Africa.

I learnt that those in power only respected us when we had power. And we only had power when we painstakingly organised our communities, workers, women, students and faith-based organisations around their bread-and-butter issues. None of those truths is different today: our role as activists is only catalytic. Success is only possible and sustainable when local leadership arises and people own and lead their own struggles. And every experience, victory or failure, must be seen as a lesson, too. Our role is to hear the voices and struggles of the grassroots we claim to represent, and make them heard on a global platform.

Today, as we stand at the edge of a precipice, we see a growing ferment in the world. It is this alienation and disconnect between leaders and citizens that has led people to taking to the streets; from the historic Arab Spring to fierce student battles for free education in Chile and Quebec, to the anti-corruption battles in India and the deadly struggle for a decent wage of the Marikana mineworkers in South Africa.

The obscene, rising poverty and inequality is fuelling social tensions, and in the absence of credible grassroots structures, violence has become the only language people feel will get their leaders to listen. Today, a new apartheid divides a global rich and predatory minority from the overwhelming majority's growing poverty, joblessness and social inequality.

The State of Civil Society 2013 affirms that empowered and informed citizens are our strongest battalions in our fight for good governance and social justice. This is a truism that is largely ignored by the bureaucracies, corporations, public sector or even civil society sometimes.

Below are some key trends to consider, as highlighted in the report:

- A shocking 57% of the world's population live in countries where basic civil liberties and political freedoms are curtailed.
- In fragile and conflict-ridden states, civil society groups speaking out against entrenched patriarchy and religious fundamentalism are increasingly becoming targets of armed groups.
- Communities that traditionally relied on rivers, forests and communal grazing grounds for their subsistence are faced with being displaced by big corporations – including extractive industries, construction firms and agri-businesses.
- With the lines between business and politics blurring, we are increasingly seeing civil society voices being relegated to the margins in discussions on the post-2015 agenda and other global matters.

Organised civil society needs deep introspection and to realign itself with people's needs and their voices, and to rebuild our legitimacy and trust with our people.

We have to return to the hard, painstaking work of organising our people and creating the tools that they are able to use to strengthen our fight for social justice and social solidarity

The report reminds us that new approaches to social transformation must harness the reinforcing nature of innovation, social connectedness and positive identities.

In the Millennium Declaration world leaders stated that "men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice." We need to hold them to it. We need to focus on the world we want, build our set of demands for an enabling environment for civil society, campaign in a focused and concerted way by building a broad-based coalition. A key to the "better future" we have promised the generations which follow us rests in our courageous and fearless leadership today.

We dare not fail.

Jay Naidoo
Chair of the Board of Directors and Chair of the Partnership Council of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

Introduction

I write this introduction at the end of my third month at CIVICUS. In this time, my conversations with colleagues, members and partners all around the world reveal a serious inconsistency. Just as we are seeing a consensus about the importance of civil society, we are seeing developments that undermine the ability of citizens to come together and shape the world around them. This inconsistency is explored in this report.

Governments, international agencies and businesses increasingly recognise that a free and vibrant civil society is a fundamental building block of democratic societies and a means to promoting economic development. Recent international agreements, such as those on development effectiveness or on protecting human rights defenders, reaffirm this consensus, while every politician I have encountered in recent months seems deeply committed to unlocking citizen potential.

Yet the reality seems very different. The conditions in which civil society operates – the enabling environment as it is referred to in our report – are shaky at best and deteriorating in many parts of the world. Our report catalogues a litany of threats to civil society, from outright violence against civic leaders to legal restrictions on civil society organisations to dramatic funding cuts.

While I recognise why so many colleagues – and indeed, many of the contributors who helped us prepare this report - are pessimistic about the state of civil society today, I am convinced that there is only one way for this discrepancy to be resolved. People power will prevail.

History teaches us that it is futile for governments to curb people's freedoms. It is a question of when, not if, citizens rise up to challenge and often overthrow political systems in which their rights are curtailed. New technologies are making it easier to access information, connect with other like-minded people, and mobilise large numbers of people. We also know that civil society is more trusted than governments or business, and that civil society groups – big and small – are finding innovative ways of improving societies across the world.

Through publications like this and through all of our other activities, CIVICUS promotes the importance of civil society. We speak out when civic space is threatened, and we try to find new ways of helping civil society around the world do its job better. If you are not already part of the CIVICUS family, I urge you to join us.

The last year may have been grim for civil society around the world, but I am convinced that the 21st century will be the century of citizen participation. Watch this space.

Dr Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah
Secretary General and Chief Executive
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Abbreviations and acronyms

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action – agreement of the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in September 2008
AGNA	Affinity Group of National Associations – an international network of CSO umbrella bodies convened by CIVICUS
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations, a regional intergovernmental organisation
AU	African Union, a regional intergovernmental organisation
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development – Australia's development donor agency
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development – an international civil society organisation
BPD	Busan Partnership for Development – the outcome document of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness
BRICS	The Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa group of countries, which have a formal relationship and are recognised as emerging powers
CARICOM	Caribbean Community, a regional intergovernmental organisation
CBO	Community-based organisation, a type of civil society organisation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency – Canada's development donor agency, now part of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
CIVICUS	CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CPDE	CSO Platform for Development Effectiveness, the CSO coalition formed to follow up on the Busan Partnership for Development
CSI	CIVICUS Civil Society Index, a civil society self-assessment project
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
CSW	CIVICUS Civil Society Watch, a project to monitor the space for civil society
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, which brings together most government development donors
Danida	Denmark's development cooperation activities
DfID	Department for International Development, the UK's development donor agency
DPO	Disabled persons' organisation, a type of civil society organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EC	European Commission – the executive body of the European Union
EE Index	CIVICUS Civil Society Enabling Environment Index, a new quantitative tool to measure conditions for civil society in different countries
EU	European Union, a regional intergovernmental organisation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FBO	Faith-based organisation, a type of civil society organisation
g7+	A group of governments of fragile and conflict-affected states
G8	A forum for the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK and USA
HLF4	Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Busan, South Korea, November/December 2011
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
HRD	Human rights defender
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
ICNL	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, an international civil society organisation
ICTs	Information communication technologies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development

IFIs	International financial institutions
IFP	International Forum of National NGO Platforms, a network of national level CSO platforms
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International non-governmental organisation, a type of civil society organisation
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre, an international civil society support CSO
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation, the global body for trade unions
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
LTA	Legitimacy, transparency and accountability
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals, eight global development goals that were supposed to be achieved by 2015
MENA	The Middle East and North Africa region
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development, a development plan for Africa introduced in 2001
NGO	Non-governmental organisation, a type of civil society organisation
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation – Norway's development donor agency
NPO	Not-for-profit organisation, used in some contexts as a synonym for civil society organisation
OAS	Organisation of American States, a regional intergovernmental organisation
ODA	Official development assistance – funding provided by government development donor bodies
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, an intergovernmental organisation of 34 countries, in which most development donor governments are represented
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference, an intergovernmental organisation of states with high Islamic populations
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, an intergovernmental organisation of North American, European and former Eastern Bloc and Soviet countries
PG	Participatory governance
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RBM	Results-based management
Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 2012
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sweden's development donor agency
SMS	Short message service – mobile phone text message
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPR	Universal periodic review process of the UN Human Rights Council, in which countries' human rights performance are reviewed
USAID	US Agency for International Development, the USA's development donor agency
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
VfM	Value for money
WFP	World Food Programme
WHRD	Women's human rights defenders
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSF	World Social Forum, a regular gathering of a wide range of civil society

Working definitions used in this report

Defining civil society

CIVICUS has long used a working definition of civil society as being "the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests." A key principle to add to our working definition is that citizen action should be voluntary, rather than through compulsion.

While many of our contributions, being authored by people who hold key positions in CSOs and networks, focus on the conditions in different contexts for CSOs, we need to bear in mind that civil society means more than its organised forms.

CSOs in all their forms – including non-governmental organisations, community groups, faith-based organisations, trade unions, informal groups (those without constitutions, boards and other organisational trappings), and many other associational forms, are part of civil society. Beyond this, individual activists, including online activists, artists and writers and human rights defenders, when they act in the public sphere to advance or defend a viewpoint that others may share, are part of civil society too. This definition suggests that the arena for civil society is fluid and dynamic: groups and individuals can move in and out of it, and be within civil society and other spheres simultaneously.

Our working definition suggests we need to acknowledge that the concerns of civil society go far beyond those conventionally considered to revolve around human rights, social justice and development. The term 'civil society' also captures a group of people meeting to defend a local transport route from closure or volunteering to clean up a communal area, an online community seeking recognition for itself or a sports or recreational club bringing together people who share an interest. However, we in the CIVICUS alliance take particular interest in those civil society forms that seek to improve people's lives and advance progressive agendas.

Defining the enabling environment

For CIVICUS, enabling civil society is why we are here. We believe societies are healthier and people live more fulfilled lives when there are multiple opportunities for self-expression, dialogue and exchange. There must be diverse spaces and places where people can come together to find points of consensus and work collectively. Our pluralist vision is only possible when there is a wide range of civil society organisations and movements and individuals that are able to act freely.

However, we know that the enabling environment for civil society can be a difficult concept to define, understand and explain.

In this report, we take the environment for civil society to mean the conditions within which civil society works: if civil society is an arena, the environment is made up of the forces that shape and influence the size, extent and functioning of that arena. In the report, we try to set out some key aspects that can be examined to determine the extent to which the environment for civil society is enabling or disenabling, and identify some further areas for investigation.

Restrictive conditions, which examples from our contributors make clear exist in many countries, make it harder for civil society groups to exist, function, grow and offer their best possible contribution to society: they are disenabling. However, enabling conditions must be understood to go beyond the simple absence of restriction, to encompass a set of conditions that actively help civil society to function and thrive. These could include having good connections between different civil society forms, adequate resourcing, widespread acceptance of the role of civil society, sustained spaces for inclusive dialogue with governments, and laws and regulations that make civil society operations easy and straightforward. As we will see in this report, this is not an exhaustive list.

1. Where are we?

a. A global context of uncertainty

The 2013 CIVICUS State of Civil Society report comes within a global context that poses considerable challenges for civil society, as well as offering some opportunities. Economic crisis continues to affect the publics and governments of many countries, not least those of Europe and North America, where it has impacted on their governments' engagements with developing countries, and the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and, to a lesser extent, South Africa); it has also fostered food and fuel price volatility, higher unemployment and slides back into poverty, which have unravelled some of the development gains made in earlier years in developing countries, including those in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Middle East and North Africa,[1] and helped to provoke mass dissent and demands for change.[2] In several European and North American countries, we are seeing increased awareness of the phenomenon of the 'squeezed middle'. Wage stagnation and the eroding of labour standards mean that people who would once have been considered secure feel that although they are working hard and holding down jobs, they are now struggling to make ends meet – a feeling long familiar to the world's poor. Again, this is fuelling unrest and increasing the likelihood of people turning to political solutions beyond those offered by established parties and platforms, as elections have reflected recently in Greece and Italy. Discourse on inequality has arguably become commonplace, with the 1% vs. the 99% meme entering mainstream public consciousness.

As with poverty and limited access to development, the impacts of these shifts are experienced most profoundly by the poorest and most vulnerable people. Indeed, many people live on the tightest of margins, and are also at risk of exposure to small-scale but devastating disasters. Citing the fact that over 50% of the world's population now live in cities, the contribution to our report from Terry Gibson, Operations Director of the Global Network for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) also warns of the dangers of social tensions, economic pressures and human-created and natural disasters associated with unplanned overdevelopment.

b. So what has changed since our last report?

In our report last year, we hoped that the great people's movements seen in the Arab Spring and the Indignados and Occupy movements could represent a decisive break from the past. CIVICUS and many other civil society organisations and movements believed that democracy and people's participation in the countries that experienced the Arab Spring would take root. This is not to deny that some gains have been made in some countries as a result of changes that the Arab Spring brought. Also, considerable efforts have been made, for example in the US and Greece, to localise the Occupy and Indignados movements to focus on community-level activity. But as documented in various contributions to our report,[3] much of the global civil society euphoria of the Arab Spring has now been lost amid the chaos, corruption and clampdowns on civil society that ensued.

A year on from the renaissance of dissent

What followed included a range of negative events that make the work of civil society harder. These included backlash from security forces, community level and sectarian violence, the imprisonment of activists, a continuing brutal conflict in Syria and political setbacks for the cause of women's empowerment, for example in Egypt. As our contribution from Front Line Defenders tells us:

"2012 confirmed what had started to emerge at the end of the previous year: the Arab Spring gave hope to millions of people in virtually every country of the region, but to date it has only brought limited real change."

It is on this basis we can say that what is happening in Egypt and Tunisia can no longer be called revolutions: a revolution is when the political interests of people who lead the protest that unseats a regime are manifested in new power structures and when old, oppressive structures are overturned. In these countries, we see new elites with interests far removed from those that motivated protests benefiting from entrenched autocratic structures.

Of course repression was not limited to those countries with frustrated revolutions. The background noise for civil society in 2012 and early 2013 came in the form of continuing uses of legislation and policy, combined with attacks in political rhetoric and physical attacks, to push back against a range of CSOs across a wide sweep of countries. This included many outside the Middle East and North Africa, as we discuss further below.

Missed opportunities at the multilateral level?

Meanwhile, many of the vast range of CSOs and others in civil society that invested precious resources in the Rio+20 process emerged disappointed at the lack of ambition of its outcomes. In June 2012, CIVICUS' verdict on Rio+20 was that:

"Many of these are leaving Rio with disappointment, anger and a sense that a pivotal opportunity has not been fully seized... Rio+20 tells us definitively that the multilateral system as it stands is no longer fit for purpose, and needs a major overhaul."[4]

Civil society is now investing considerable energy and resources in trying to influence the post Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework. Although some gains have undoubtedly been made in recent years as a result of concerted and collective civil society effort, overall the existing global development framework is still critiqued by many CSOs for being a top-down imposition, characterised by unequal relationships between rich and poor countries and with little recognition of civil society's inclusion, role and contribution in development.[5] At CIVICUS, we advocate that development has to go hand in hand with democracy and human rights. There are valid concerns among civil society that the post-2015 agenda is being seen more in terms of an enabling environment for economic growth than one that enhances good governance, people's participation and democratic oversight.[6] Processes, which are not inclusive, are already well underway to define post-2015 development goals. The fear must be that the disappointment in multilateral processes, which civil society has come to know only too well, is experienced again.

The continuing rise of the BRICS

It is increasingly clear to many in civil society that the functioning of multilateral institutions, and particularly UN agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, which came into existence at the beginning of the Cold War, has not adjusted to a changing world with shifting centres of power. We continue to see the rise of a cluster of large countries that enjoy growing political and economic clout, and influence over their neighbouring countries. At the heart of this cluster are the BRICS countries.

One potentially positive recent outcome from the BRICS bloc may come in the form of the eThekwini Declaration, issued by the BRICS summit held in Durban, South Africa in March 2013. This announced the launch of a BRICS Development Bank for financing infrastructure needs in developing economies. If the BRICS countries are to advance progressive values by ensuring that civil society plays a key role in shaping this institution, then it will require strong civil society advocacy in BRICS countries to seek the inclusion of human rights and social accountability principles in every aspect of the bank's design. It should also be a key demand that the bank's funds are not used to support oppressive governments.[7]

One emerging challenge demonstrated by the BRICS countries is the significant lag between a country's rise to global political prominence and the evolution of civil society structures and focuses, backed by a supportive legal and policy framework. For example, our contribution from Brazilian CSO network Associação Brasileira de Organizações Não Governamentais (ABONG) points out that the legal framework recognises Brazil as an Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipient but not as a provider of cooperation resources to developing countries. Civil society coalitions that attempt influence over foreign policy in such countries tend to be nascent and untested, and need to be better encouraged and supported.

Lessons from the post-Busan process

Our previous State of Civil Society report highlighted that one of the breakthroughs achieved at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, South Korea in November/December 2011,[8] was the acknowledgement of the link between the standards set out in international human rights agreements and the conditions that enable CSOs to maximise their contribution to development. Another was the acknowledgement of the CSO-authored International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness as the basis for CSOs to be held accountable as effective development actors.[9] This is an important benchmark in establishing the vital role of civil society, and its autonomy, with Busan also having reaffirmed the principle that CSOs are independent development actors in their own right.

The Busan agreement implies that a strong and vibrant civil society is in itself a development end, not only as a tool for helping to advance the development efforts of others. The difference between taking an instrumental and intrinsic value of civil society, in this case specifically looking at donor viewpoints, is established by our contributors Jacqueline Wood and Karin Fällman:

"At the instrumental end of the spectrum are those who believe CSOs are best placed to implement projects and programmes on behalf of donors and governments, filling gaps until such time as developing country governments are in a position to close them. On the other end of the spectrum are those who see civil society, and donor relationships with CSOs, as complementary and just as necessary as donor relationships with governments and the private sector to the social, economic, and democratic development of any country."

In the lead up to the Busan forum, CSOs argued that there was a need to detach the principle that development policies and practices should be nationally owned – country ownership – from the frequent conflation that this means they should be government-owned. As noted in our contribution from the Reality of Aid Africa, the notion of democratic ownership of development opens up new scope for CSOs in the development sphere to demand to be involved in development processes, including when they do not necessarily align with government-led development priorities.

The year in review

An overview of key events since the State of Civil Society was published in April 2012

2012		
Date	**Country**	**Event**
1 April	Myanmar	Voters go to the polls in elections in Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy wins 43 out of 45 seats.
16 April	International	Jim Yong Kim, co-founder and executive director of CSO Partners in Health, is elected President of the World Bank.
28 April	Malaysia	Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrate in Kuala Lumpur to call for free and fair elections as the 13th General Elections get underway. Police brutally suppress protestors, with over 500 individuals arrested and journalists assaulted.
8 May	Thailand	Ampon Tangnoppakul, a Thai man in his 60s who was sentenced to 20 years in jail for sending a text message deemed offensive to the royal family, dies.
24 May	Egypt	Voters in Egypt go to the polls for the presidential election, 18 months after Hosni Mubarak was ousted. A month later, Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood is declared the winner.
24 May	Hungary	The Hungarian Parliament passes legislative amendments to curb media freedoms.
19 June	United Kingdom	Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, takes refuge in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London to avoid extradition to Sweden to face charges of sexual assault.
20–22 June	Brazil	The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20) marks the 20th anniversary of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). CSOs criticise the conference's outcomes as placing private profit before people and the environment.
26 June	Mexico	A new law for the protection of human rights defenders and journalists takes effect in Mexico.
9 July	International	Russia and China veto a UN Security Council resolution that threatens Syria with sanctions over the use of deadly force against civilians in the on-going conflict. Eleven Security Council members vote in favour while Pakistan and South Africa abstain.
13 July	Russia	Russia passes a Bill obliging NGOs that receive funding from abroad to register as foreign agents or risk heavy fines and jail time.
30 July	Syria	The UN estimates that over 200,000 people have fled intense fighting in Aleppo in the previous two days.
30 July	Sudan	Twelve protestors, mostly students, are killed and over a hundred injured as police use live ammunition on protestors.
16 August	South Africa	In the Marikana Massacre, 34 miners are killed and another 78 injured when police officers fire at striking workers at the Lonmin Platinum Mine near Rustenburg, South Africa.
17 August	Russia	Three members of Pussy Riot are convicted of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred and sentenced to two years in prison.
30 August	Tibet	China announces a US$4.7 billion controversial theme park in Tibet.
11 September	Libya	The US Ambassador to Libya is one of four people killed in an attack on the US Embassy in Benghazi.

2012		
Date	**Country**	**Event**
13 September	India	10,000 protestors in Tamil Nadu state demand the closure of a nuclear plant. Police use live ammunition against villagers. One person is killed, dozens hospitalised and 50 people arrested.
9 October	Pakistan	Pakistan human rights child activist Malala Yousafzai is shot in the head and neck by the Tehreek-e-Taliban while she sits with classmates on a school bus.
19 October	Ethiopia	The Supreme Court upholds the freezing of assets of Ethiopia's last two remaining human rights groups.
24- 29 October	The Americas	Hurricane Sandy wreaks havoc in nine countries in the Caribbean and North America, killing at least 285 people and resulting in nearly US$75 billion in damage.
7 November	Greece	Greek police fire teargas and water cannons to disperse approximately 100,000 protestors who protest in the main square in opposition to a new austerity package.
16 November	India	The rape of an Indian woman on a bus in New Delhi sparks nationwide protests and global concern about India's treatment of women.
26 November	Belarus	Leading Belarusian human rights group Viasna is evicted from its office as its premises are sealed by government officials.
1 December	Colombia	After receiving multiple threats from paramilitary group Black Eagles, Miller Angula Rivera of the Association of Displaced Afro Colombians (AFRODES) is killed in Colombia.
4–15 December	The Philippines	The most powerful typhoon to ever hit the Philippines kills more than 1,000 people and causes over US$1 billion in damage.
8 December	Qatar	The UN climate conference agrees to extend the Kyoto Protocol until 2020.
25 December	Nigeria	In Christmas church bombings in Nigeria, attacks on two churches kill 12 people.
2013		
10 January	France	The co-founder of the Kurdistan Workers' Party and two other Kurdish activists are found dead in Paris.
24 January	Vietnam	Human rights blogger Le Anh Hung is kidnapped from his workplace by security agents and temporarily interned in a mental health facility.
28 January	Iran	Iran arrests 14 journalists for alleged cooperation with foreign-based language media organisations.
5 February	Bangladesh	Hundreds of thousands of people upset with the verdict of the Bangladesh war crimes tribunal protest. Around 60 people have died in the so-called Shahbag protests, which are ongoing at the time of going to press.
20 February	Bulgaria	Following nationwide protests against electricity prices and austerity measures, the Bulgarian prime minister announces that his cabinet will resign.
21 March	International	The UN Human Rights Council passes landmark resolution to protect human rights defenders.
24 March	Central African Republic	Rebel leader of the Séléka movement, Michel Djotodia, storms the Presidential Palace and declares himself president.
1 April	Sudan	The President of Sudan orders the release of all political prisoners.
14 April	Venezuela	Following Hugo Chavez's death on 1 April, Venezuela elects his successor Nicolás Maduro as President by a narrow margin.

Our contribution from AidWatch Canada makes clear the connection between democratic ownership of development and the enabling environment for civil society:

"Strengthening democratic ownership for development and an improved CSO enabling environment go hand-in-hand. The institutionalisation of democratic policy processes involving a diversity of CSOs with respect to the planning, implementation and assessment of development priorities at the country level will also lead to strengthened enabling conditions for CSOs."

Sustained engagement by civil society is now needed to monitor governments' follow-through on their Busan commitments and to expose government actions that are not consistent with these commitments. This includes actions that might limit or undermine the environment for civil society. Nevertheless, major opportunities for global level dialogue on the enabling environment have flowed from Busan. The ministerial-level Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation established following Busan includes the CPDE as a full partner.[11] There is also a multi-stakeholder Task Team on Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment that brings together representatives of donors, governments and CSOs, one of the roles of which is to give greater political profile to norms and good practices on the enabling environment.

As argued in our contribution from AidWatch Canada, the Busan process should represent a new minimum standard for the inclusion of CSOs. It should remain a civil society demand that future multilateral processes, including those to elaborate and apply development goals, should be as inclusive as Busan. In March 2013, CSOs, as well as the multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment, proposed just this to the High Level Panel on Post-2015 Development Goals.

These relatively positive examples of collaborations around the development effectiveness agenda point to what may seem a self-evident truth, but one we feel frequently needs restating: one way to improve the environment for civil society is to begin and work through collaborations and partnerships with state agencies and other actors that affect the conditions for civil society. While partnerships have an instrumental value, in helping to achieve progress towards specific goals, they also have an intrinsic value: they help to build capital and trust, and demonstrate that there is value-added to democracy and good governance from civil society inclusion. By implication, this also suggests that one way to improve the environment for civil society, and promote dialogue about its improvement, is to look for areas where collaboration seems most possible, and to build up from these collaborations.

The Enabling Environment Index as a monitoring tool

Although the 2013 State of Civil Society report presents a wealth of evidence, case studies and fresh insights, we recognise also the pressing need for reliable, comparative, quantitative information to fill the gap of systematic research and reporting on the enabling environment.

CIVICUS is working with the University of Pretoria, South Africa to develop the Civil Society Enabling Environment Index (EE Index). The EE index will be a regular global assessment of key external dimensions affecting civil society, which measures and analyses changing trends in influences on the enabling environment in different countries. In line with our broad view of the conditions that affect civil society, the EE Index will examine not only the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern CSOs in each country, but also other political or societal conditions that may be enabling or disenabling.

This will be accompanied by work to help assess the enabling environment at the national level, in partnership with the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). Between 2012 and 2015, we are conducting national assessments in selected countries, with the intention of building a collective knowledge base on the environment for civil society, in different contexts.

It is important and encouraging that the enabling environment for CSOs is one of the indicators for measuring progress on Busan commitments. The EE Index is one initiative we are undertaking as a member of the CSO Platform for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) that will contribute to the development of an indicator on the enabling environment.

We recognise that members of the civil society Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness and BetterAid coalitions, now succeeded by the CPDE, have advocated for the enabling environment to be seen primarily in terms of the legal and policy conditions that enable or disenable CSOs to act effectively as development actors.[10] Our EE Index will be broader in remit as it seeks to measure a set of conditions that impact on the capacity of citizens, whether individually or in an organised fashion, to participate and engage in the civil society arena in a sustained and voluntary manner.

We invite interested stakeholders to join us in a consultative process to debate our conceptual and methodological framework for the index and determine the extent to which we weight the different dimensions of the index. Further information is available on our website.

In this regard, our contribution from AidWatch Canada points out:

"Improvements in CSO enabling conditions at the country level will require changes to how CSOs are perceived as development actors by governments and donors. Sometimes, these changes can happen as a consequence of CSO collaboration on issues more in harmony with the particular interests of developing country governments. For example, in the final preparations for Busan, several African CSO activists worked closely with government officials through the Africa Union (AU), which resulted in a common African agenda for Busan. In this engagement with government officials and ministers, CSOs were able not only to influence the African agenda, but also give a practical demonstration of the value-added of civil society expertise."

One caveat that should be made when considering the value of Busan is that it doesn't necessarily relate to the full spectrum of civil society and civil society's concerns. Civil society isn't just about development, or engagement with multilateral agencies and processes, and civil society is more than CSOs. A focus on government and donor policies and actions should not cause us to overlook that there is considerable civil society that did not necessarily see the need to engage in the Busan processes, and that indeed not only does not rely on donor funding, but exists and thrives outside donor frameworks. Nevertheless, the value of Busan remains, beyond its immediate sphere, as an example of successful civil society inclusion, and of civil society collaboration and sustained action to maximise influence.

A ray of hope from the European Union

A further fresh opportunity arose for civil society in 2012 in the form of a statement of recognition by the European Commission of the value of civil society, as set out in its 2012 Communication on relations with CSOs – The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations – which states that:

"The international community, the EU included, has a duty to advocate for a space to operate for both CSOs and individuals. The EU should lead by example, creating peer pressure through diplomacy and political dialogue with governments and by publicly raising human rights concerns... In its cooperation with partner governments, the EU will seek to scale up public authorities' capacity to work constructively with civil society."[12]

For the first time, this codifies opportunities for CSOs to engage at different levels: with the European Union (EU), to make sure that its actions follow its rhetoric and mean the EU becomes an active agent for the development of new, progressive civil society norms; with governments in EU member countries to hold them to these standards; and with the governments of countries in which the EU and its agencies are involved to seek to improve the conditions for civil society as part of EU interventions. It sets standards that can be used to monitor whether improvements to conditions for civil society result from EU activities. It also suggests potential for civil society collaboration between internationally-oriented CSOs in EU member countries and CSOs in developing countries in which the EU is active.

This acknowledgement of the value of civil society notwithstanding, the current actions of several EU member governments towards civil society remain challenging, as expressed through some rather ambivalent attitudes toward civil society in their countries, and towards developing country civil society in their ODA decisions, as we discuss further below. As CONCORD Europe, a network of European civil society platforms puts it:

"Even though EU governments have an enabling regulatory framework for civil society actions, budgetary decisions in several member states in the past few years have been strongly disadvantageous for supporting civil society actions."

The outlook

The contemporary outlook could therefore appear gloomy for civil society, but in the midst of this, openings to seek change continue to arise. Some new strategies are being formed and applied to fight back and help civil society to play its proper roles. Contributions to this report offer a number of experiences and tools for potential replication. Many of these underline the essential value of building civil society connections and coalitions, and of international solidarity.

2. What do we mean when we talk about the enabling environment?

The enabling environment for civil society is not always an easy concept to grasp. There is not necessarily agreement among civil society and the people and institutions with a stake in civil society on what a strong civil society enabling environment should look like. It is, in other words, an evolving concept. CIVICUS, not least through our ongoing work to define and deploy the EE Index, and our work with ICNL to assess the enabling environment at the country level, is seeking to improve understanding of, support for and intelligence on the enabling environment.

Thinking beyond the national level

We need to understand where to look, as well as what to look at. The enabling environment is something we mostly tend to think about at the national level. For example, when we examine laws, regulations and policies that affect whether CSOs are free to realise their potential, we normally look at national level laws, regulations and policies. It is important, however, not to fall into the trap of stopping our scrutiny and analysis at national borders.

In contexts where there is repression, we need to hold on to the fact that the minimal package of civil society rights that we in the CIVICUS alliance seek to defend and promote as the foundation of the enabling environment – the freedom of opinion and expression, freedom to associate and freedom to assemble – are globally defined, and enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights and international human rights standards. When we are seeking to improve the conditions for civil society in difficult national contexts, it is essential to make reference to globally endorsed rights, and to use multilateral as well as national levers.

For example, our contribution from Russian CSO Citizens' Watch sees clear value in working internationally to exert pressure to improve national level standards, and particularly in a key multilateral arena for civil society, the UN Human Rights Council:

"It cannot be emphasised too much; the outcome of this struggle depends, to a great extent, on solidarity with the international human rights community that Russian NGOs are able to rally."

Regional intergovernmental bodies, such as the Council of Europe in Russia's case, and bodies such as the African Union and European Union in other contributions made to our report, also offer important levers. They can take the focus away from contentious national level debate, and help define supportive norms at a higher level by sharing more positive experiences from neighbouring countries.

The use of international spaces also helps demonstrate the value of international civil society connections, particularly those collaborations that bring exchanges of solidarity and practical support between national CSOs and international CSOs familiar with the workings of multilateral processes.

At the same time, multilateral engagement can provoke domestic risks: our contributor Front Line Defenders reports that in March 2012 Sri Lankan activists faced threats from high level government officials after taking part in a Human Rights Council session. Bahraini civil society activists were similarly targeted for their participation in a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session of the Human Rights Council on Bahrain in May 2012.[13] Meanwhile as our contributor from Venezuelan organisation Civilis reports, the Venezuelan government's response to criticism from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, which held a progressive regional level hearing on Legal Restrictions on Freedom of Association in Latin America in March 2012, was to withdraw from this body.

A multilateral enabling environment?

A second concern beyond the national level is the extent to which the environment is enabling for civil society within multilateral processes, both formal and informal. We believe it is still important to push for civil society inclusion in international processes, with a notable first in 2012 being the consultative status granted to some CSOs - humanitarian NGOs - in the Organisation of Islamic Conference meeting held in Djibouti. However there is also a strong civil society critique, particularly following Rio+20, of the ceremonial inclusion of civil society. Nothing has changed since Rio+20 to challenge our verdict that multilateral overhaul is needed.

Our contribution from INTRAC puts forward essential questions on UN reform:

"…the UN system needs to review its roles, focus and priorities. Key questions here include: are the large numbers of development groups or specialised agencies as necessary as they once were? With both bilateral and CSO donors leaving many countries, should the UN be considering its own roles in these countries more acutely? Perhaps re-focussing UN priorities and action around governance at the international level and working in areas of comparative advantages for multilateral organisations (e.g. influence on governments, certain forms of technical expertise, working in the poorest areas) makes more sense for UN development agencies…"

Key principles

The 2011 International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness, the outcomes of broad civil society consultations by the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, sets out five essential areas for minimum standards that together form a definition of an enabling environment for CSOs: respect for human rights obligations; CSOs as actors in their own right: democratic political and policy dialogue; accountability and transparency; and enabling financing.

From our consultations for this report a number of potential dimensions emerged, elaborating and expanding on this framework, which can influence the environment for civil society. This is not an exhaustive list, but on the basis of contributions to our report, we suggest that these are key priorities or areas of apparent opportunity. These include two major areas where it seems that CSOs themselves can take some straightforward steps to help facilitate a more enabling environment:

- ***Internal steps that can be taken to improve CSOs' legitimacy, transparency and accountability.*** *An enabling environment is one where civil society groups have taken – and are recognised and expected to have taken - every effort to be transparent and accountable to their stakeholders, and their legitimacy is considered to be derived from their endorsement by their stakeholders, particularly those in whose interests they claim to act.*
- ***Connections between CSOs.*** *An enabling environment is one where there are multiple connections and collaborations between different civil society groups and individuals, including different types of groups, and there are collaborative platforms and coalitions at different levels, including thematic levels and local, national and international levels, such that civil society groups can share intelligence, pool resources and maximise their strengths and opportunities.*

There are a number of areas where CSOs should seek for key principles and standards to be reached and upheld:

- ***The legal and regulatory environment.*** *An enabling environment is one where the state's laws, regulations and policies on civil society (at both national and sub-national level) make it easy for civil society groups to form, operate free from unwarranted interference, express their views, communicate, convene, cooperate and seek resources. An enabling environment is also one that promotes the rights of individuals to freedom of expression, assembly and association and protects citizens from harm that may result from the exercise of those rights.*
- ***The political and governmental environment.*** *An enabling environment is one where the institutions and agencies of government, including government bodies, political parties and politicians, recognise civil society as a legitimate social actor, and provide systematic opportunities for state and civil society institutions to work together. An enabling environment is also one where there are well-established mechanisms for managing conflict and post-conflict transition, and where civil society personnel are able to go about their work and lives without fear of attack, with full recourse to the criminal justice system in the event of attack.*
- ***Public attitudes, trust, tolerance and participation.*** *An enabling environment is one where the public recognise civil society as a legitimate social actor; there is extensive trust in civil society bodies, and in other public actors; there is general tolerance of people and groups who have different viewpoints and identities; and where it is easy for people to participate in civil society and there is widespread voluntary participation across a range of civil society platforms and spaces.*
- ***Corruption.*** *An enabling environment is one where there is zero tolerance of corruption by state officials, political actors, people in business and civil society personnel, and where civil society is free to call attention to corruption issues and this is accepted as a legitimate civil society role.*
- ***Communications and technology.*** *An enabling environment is one where civil society groups and individuals have reliable, cheap and widespread access to communications platforms and technologies; and where civil society personnel have numerous opportunities to put their views across in the public domain alongside those of people from government, politics and the business sphere, and a diversity of voices are represented in different media.*
- ***Resources.*** *An enabling environment is one where civil society groups are able to access resources from a range of sustainable sources, including domestically, and to define their own activities, rather than have these defined by funding opportunities.*

Naturally, as we will see, these areas are not really so neatly distinct; they are highly interdependent, and relate to and influence each other.

The ETC Group's contribution also critiques CSOs' apparent complicity in the weak role they are allowed in processes such as Rio+20, pointing out that:

"As we look for the elements of an enabling environment for civil society, we need to look at both civil society's strengths and its limitations. An enabling environment doesn't just mean changing the rules, it means remembering civil society roles."

In this critique, civil society needs to play to its strengths, such as its knowledge, the growing connections within civil society, its staying power, and its access to public trust. However, civil society also needs to acknowledge key weaknesses, such as a deficiency in adequate engagement with decision-makers, a lack of detailed participation in processes, and excessive caution. To date, the analysis suggests, there have been gaps in strategy, lack of engagement by developed country CSOs with developing country governments, and little willingness to challenge or break rules, as well as an absence of joined-up communications strategy.

A further concern with the multilateral sphere is that the nuanced understanding many of us now have about the scope and diversity of civil society, given our heightened awareness of the social movements that came to prominence in recent years, is for the most part not reflected in the patterns of civil society inclusion in large, global processes. As civil society, our understanding of what civil society is and does has evolved faster than that of multilateral bodies. We need to ask: to what extent are the CSOs accredited to multilateral meetings, such as those of international financial institutions, representative of the breadth and depth of civil society? Are these essentially the same organisations that shuttle from one international meeting to another? And whose interests can they claim to represent? As our contributor from the ETC Group puts it:

"A clear distinction needs to be made between not-for-profit civil society organisations or NGOs and social movements. It is no longer acceptable for NGOs to speak for marginalised peoples."

The response to dissatisfaction with the multilateral world as it currently stands should including calling for improvement in the environment for civil society participation in multilateral processes, but it should also entail critically assessing the way in which we as civil society operate, and being flexible enough to adopt new techniques and bring in a broader range of civil society voices. An example of good practice offered is that of the Committee on Food Security, as in this official UN body there is high status given to civil society, credible civil society voice, and conscious reaching out to leadership from social movements, such as Via Campesina, beyond CSOs.

This positive experience of civil society inclusion, and that of the Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation, when compared with largely disappointing experiences in other forums, suggests that civil society must identify and work with supportive governments to push for meaningful inclusion of representative and diverse CSOs in UN structures and processes. In particular we should push for this in the authorship, implementation and monitoring of post-2015 development goals.

The dilemma that arises in considering the multilateral environment for civil society is that of the hierarchy of needs and opportunities: where best should CSOs place their limited resources? Should these be concentrated at the multilateral level in the hope of influencing international frameworks, which can in turn be used to set new norms, around which advocacy can be organised to improve conditions at the national level? Or given that the enabling environment concept is one that is not yet won, does it make sense to seek improvement at the national level and then try to influence governments to translate these to the multilateral arena?

On the balance of the contributions to our report, it seems clear that there is still much to be done at the national level, and this remains the critical arena for winning the argument on the enabling environment and seeking change. But there is still value in being able to make comparisons and share knowledge between civil society in different countries, and a need for international networking and solidarity to support national efforts. CSOs must also seek not to duplicate each other's efforts or compete in the international arena. There is a need for different strata of civil society to operate at the most level most appropriate to them, but also for cooperation that builds equitable connections between colleagues working at different levels.[14]

Thinking below the national level

An underexplored idea that we suggest needs future investigation is that of the sub-national environment for civil society, where local levels of governance can have an impact on the conditions for civil society distinct from the decisions made by national governments. This is particularly the case in large countries, such as India and Pakistan, where state and provincial governments have wide powers, countries where there is a high level of devolved power, such as Switzerland and the UK, and countries where traditional local authority remains important, as in many Pacific islands.

For example, our contribution from Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) tells us that a potentially helpful national

policy on the voluntary sector, addressing issues such as the autonomy of CSOs, their ability to raise funds and partnerships with the government, was introduced in 2007, but has been stymied because it has not passed into legislation at the state level. Our contribution from the NGO Federation of Nepal points to unnecessary conditions being imposed on CSOs by local administrations.

It is clear that in our work on the environment for civil society, we need to continue to take account of the reality that local level governance structures and spaces are important to many, given that many of the decisions that influence people's daily lives are made at the sub-national level. Indeed, we could go so far as to argue that people do not live in countries as much as they live in cities, villages and states within a country.

A need to localise our analysis goes hand in hand with our understanding in civil society of the value of bottom-up processes that flow from the local level. As the contribution from GNDR's Terry Gibson points out:

"Many policies intended to drive progress in disaster risk reduction are primarily created and then implemented in a top down way. They are led from an (often external) institutional and governmental level, depending on plans, leadership, knowledge and expertise far removed from the local scene. The result is a gap between high-level policy and practical implementation... good local governance depends on good local knowledge and the key ingredient for local governance based on local knowledge is an active citizenry."

This dissonance is not only applicable in the context of disaster reduction, but to civil society more broadly: in any sphere of work, strengthening resilience and capacity at the local level requires strong local organisations and partnerships – and a focus on enhancing the local level environment for civil society.

3. Key aspects of the enabling environment and recent trends

We first call attention to two key aspects where we in civil society can ourselves lead on steps to make an enabling environment more likely, and in doing so enhance our abilities to make demands of the government, politicians and others who influence the environment for civil society by speaking from a position of increased strength.

a. Legitimacy, transparency and accountability

Many CSOs have long acknowledged they should demonstrate that they are modelling good practice – in effect to mirror internally the enabling environment they would seek for their work externally.[15] We could go further and say that transparency, honesty, humility, and indeed an ability to admit and report on failure, should be key civil society values, and a point of distinction between civil society and other realms, such as those of government and business. As such civil society should be in the vanguard of demonstrating best practice in legitimacy, transparency and accountability, and be confident enough to admit failure when it occurs.

Actions by CSOs to prove they are transparent and accountable, and that they enjoy legitimacy and credibility among their key constituents, are not just an important end in themselves, but also give CSOs a stronger platform to demonstrate they have made the changes they seek in others, and to rebut criticisms and verbal attacks that make it harder for CSOs to do their work.

Steps to demonstrate the legitimacy, accountability and transparency of CSOs, and prove their effectiveness, continue to be important. Our contribution from the past Executive Director of the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia reports that in Cambodia there is CSO enthusiasm for a self-certification initiative, while in India, VANI highlights that there have been recent improvements in self-reporting from CSOs, in part to head off regulatory threats, accompanied by increased networking among CSOs:

"...internally, voluntary organisations have invested time and meagre resources to improve their management systems. VANI produced a document on draft internal policies that was well received by the voluntary sector... Organisations are coming together to face the challenges and redefining their relationships with government, private sector and other stakeholders."

In Brazil, ABONG acknowledges that the existence and subsequent exposure of fake CSOs, including bogus organisations formed as front organisations for corrupt government officials, harms civil society itself. In the 2013 edition of the Edelman Trust Barometer, trust in Brazil in NGOs, to use its term, declined by a drastic 31 points, which

was attributed to a series of crises and scandals that plagued CSOs.[16] CSOs therefore have a self-interest in developing a regulatory environment that makes clear their legitimacy and credibility.

It is encouraging in this regard that the recommendations of the 2012 CIVICUS World Assembly, held in Montreal, Canada in September 2012, speak about what steps civil society actors themselves feel they should take to improve the arrangements of governance, rather than simply make demands of governments and donors. Recommendations include those of building new connections and partnerships, seeking alternative funding models, integrating issues of sustainability in CSO approaches, and working within a human rights framework.[17]

While self-regulation initiatives and mechanisms have so far primarily been deployed at the national level, the continued growth of global initiatives such as the INGO Accountability Charter, to which international CSO members including CIVICUS submit annual accountability reports, suggests that there is an increasing need to look at accountability issues beyond national borders.[18] There is real value in sharing experiences and promoting good practice across countries on which types of legitimacy, transparency and accountability initiatives work best in different contexts.

b. Connections, coalitions and solidarity

A second area where CSOs can take steps to enhance their strength and increase the potential for improving their environment is in making civil society connections. In examining the environment for civil society we need to consider the extent, level and quality of connections, and state of relations, between CSOs: not only between individual CSOs, but also between CSOs of different types (for example, between development-oriented CSOs and trade unions, or between human rights CSOs and faith groups).

At CIVICUS, we naturally take a deep interest in civil society connections, and are concerned with the relatively weak connections we have seen between different parts of civil society, such as the gap between established CSOs and new social movements.[19] We believe the argument is being won, and it is becoming clearer that civil society is generally more effective, and we can win more recognition for our efforts, when we work together and make stronger connections between like-minded organisations and individuals. This enable-s us collectively to develop stronger capacities to engage governments and other holders of power. For example, our contributions from Platformas das ONGs de Cabo Verde and Guinea's Forum des ONG pour le Développement Durable argue that better networks and connections within civil society are a necessary precondition for enhancing civil society's relationship with the state. Our contribution from INTRAC points to some of the new collaborative movements their Civil Society at a Crossroads international research programme has observed:

"...movements arising from students' protests (Chile), abortion campaigning (Uruguay), campaigns for lesbian and gay partnerships (Argentina), and commuter movements (Indonesia). These movements illustrate the importance of social groups making broad alliances in favour of generic issues significant to society."

Part of the value of a focus on civil society connections is that it helps us to take an assets-based approach - identifying what currently exists of value and working to strengthen and expand these assets - rather than focussing only on deficits. In doing so, it can help us add nuance to what could otherwise be a rather disempowering narrative: that the conditions for civil society are determined solely by external forces (such as governments, donors and multilateral agencies), and that these are far from ideal. While in many contexts the conditions for civil society are of course seriously affected by external forces, it is important for us to remember that there are steps we can take to improve the conditions for our work.

The formation of CSO coalitions can also be significant in contexts of crisis or conflict. The formation of a new civil society coalition in Somalia – the Somali Civil Society Alliance - across three previously warring regions is seen as a step forward in civil society's role in promoting peace-building by our contributor, the SISA Centre for Corporate Partnership, which is also the Head of Secretariat for the Africa CSO Platform on Principled Partnership (ACP). In South Sudan, the NGO Forum has formed to coordinate humanitarian and development efforts in order to address the needs of the citizens of this newly independent state.

The challenge always for civil society is that of how to maintain this kind of coalition approach when a moment of crisis or opportunity is past. Our contribution from US civil society platform InterAction affirms the value of a long-term coalition-building strategy for developing stronger negotiating positions with government over key points of development policy. The post-Busan process, where the CPDE formed in December 2012 as a coalition to sustain civil society engagement on development effectiveness, bringing together the two networks that had led work ahead of Busan – BetterAid and the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness – is one area where much energy and time has clearly gone into sustaining a coalition beyond events.

Collaborative strategies in advocacy success in Cambodia

Our contribution from Cambodia demonstrates the value of collaboration. Several attempts were made by the government to introduce a new law to regulate NGOs and other types of CSOs, which many in civil society fear would be harmful. Moves to introduce the law were put on hold in December 2011 for a period of two years, following a tenacious and voluble civil society campaign.

The Cambodian contribution suggests that international solidarity and internal coalition-building were central to their success in winning the time to work further with government, with the aim of challenging and changing disabling provisions in the draft bill. The proposed law was seen as an existential threat and therefore forced together different types of CSOs that would not normally combine. Meanwhile, national-international CSO connections helped to achieve publicity and awareness.

The Cambodian approach also combined advocacy at different levels - national, regional and global – suggesting we need to look for opportunities and points of leverage beyond the national level. The fact that Cambodia's government is currently chairing the Association of South East Asian Nations, a regional intergovernmental organisation, and would presumably want to use this as an opportunity to burnish its international image, offered one lever. With donors, the advocacy message was that strong development progress and donor investments that had been made in Cambodia's significant recovery from past conflict were at risk. Seeking government engagement with and support for the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness[20] was another way of brokering dialogue, playing to Cambodia's desire to present itself in the right way on the world stage.

c. The policy and legal sphere

While CSOs can work in these first two key areas to improve the potential for a more enabling environment, and to enhance their own strength and negotiating power, it is nevertheless the case that forces outside the civil society arena affect the conditions for civil society. Even if civil society is the best it can be, external actors can interact with and hinder the steps CSOs take in these areas. For example, CSOs can find that their own attempts to advance transparency and accountability are not reciprocated by the state. Indeed, higher levels of corruption and poor governance in broader society make it harder to be transparent and work in accountable ways. Similarly, attempts at civil society collaboration may be stymied by laws and regulations that create barriers against them.

At CIVICUS, we have long had a special interest in the legislation and government policies that affect the ability of CSOs to form, function and flourish. Many of the contributions to our report make clear that the legislative and policy sphere is still an important area of contestation. It is one in which, across a range of countries, various attempts are being made to reduce and restrict the space for civil society.

Barriers to assembly

Many recent restrictions are barriers imposed against the right to peaceful assembly – a move that seems clearly to come as a reaction to the surge of people-power protests in 2012. For example, ICNL's contribution reports that in 2012 Malaysia's law banning street protests came into effect; penalties against protests were steeply increased in Azerbaijan;[21] and restrictions on demonstrations involving more than 50 people were introduced in Quebec, Canada, following widespread student protests. Meanwhile, in Bahrain the Ministry of the Interior criminalised marches and gatherings in 2012, while in Russia, a controversial law was enacted which increased existing penalties for violating rules on public protests by a staggering 150 times for individuals and 300 times for organisations. ICNL argues that the situation here is growing worse.

The full realisation of the right to peaceful assembly is an essential condition for enabling civil society. This is therefore an area where CSOs and networks, including CIVICUS, need to stay informed, active and coordinated to intervene when attempts to reduce the legal and policy space for dissent are made.

Barriers to CSO formation and operation

A number of governments have recently either introduced laws or announced that they intend to do so to regulate the formation and operation of CSOs. Such laws would make the registration requirements for CSOs more strict, through practices such as:

- prohibiting unregistered organisations from conducting activities (Cuba, Uzbekistan, Zambia);
- stipulating the category and number of eligible founders (Malaysia, Qatar, Thailand, Turkmenistan);

- expensive, complex registration processes (Eritrea, Vietnam);
- vague grounds for denial of registration (Bahrain, Malaysia, Russia);
- burdensome re-registration requirements (Uzbekistan, Zambia);
- barriers for international organisations (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uganda).[22]

As these examples indicate, registration requirements may be lengthy, onerous or expensive, and therefore particularly difficult for smaller CSOs. Further, laws in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, for example, give the state the power to declare a CSO unlawful or withdraw its registration. In early 2013, the government of Indonesia introduced a Bill on Mass Organisations, which would prohibit some CSOs and give the government power to suspend or dissolve CSOs.[23] ICNL reports that there seems to be a particular problem with the introduction of regressive laws in Asia, especially South East Asia, at present.

Even in Norway, where relationships between civil society and government are favourably assessed by our contributor, Norwegian CSO network Frivillighet Norge, bureaucracy is still identified as a challenge:

"The most worrying trend is towards more bureaucracy, where organisations are required to provide more and more detailed reports to multiple public offices. The situation is most worrying on the local level, where the organisations are entirely dependent upon voluntary work. Although it is a priority from the government to reduce bureaucracy, this has not resulted in any real improvements."

Some governments use registration requirements as a way of placing limitations on activities that CSOs are lawfully permitted to do. The prohibition of 'political activity' in India, generally left ill-defined, invites closer state intervention into and scrutiny of CSOs' activities. Laws in Afghanistan, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Russia and Tanzania each prohibit certain 'spheres of activity'.[24] Our Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) partner, the Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF) reports that the Ugandan NGO Act has a very narrow definition of appropriate activity, which does not admit the policy and advocacy roles of CSOs. The UNNGOF further points out that under Regulation 13 of the amended NGO Law, NGOs have to provide seven days written notification to local councils and resident direct commissioners before directly contacting people living in an area within their jurisdiction.

Our contribution from Canadian CSOs (Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Forest Ethics Advocacy and Voices–Voix) identifies a rise in threats to withdraw charitable status from numerous CSOs, and some intrusive audits. In response, environmental CSO Forest Ethics Canada went so far as to give up its charitable status, including the tax advantages associated with this, so that it could continue its advocacy work without government interference. In India, some CSOs report experiencing frequent inspection visits, which can fuel public suspicion of CSOs, or requirements to report on their work to the police frequently. In Belarus and Russia, tax inspections are used as a tactic to disrupt CSO work.

In some countries, including many in sub-Saharan Africa, a challenge is the application of outdated, colonial era laws which are not fit for purpose given contemporary realities of governance and the ways in which civil society has changed. Patchworks of different laws relating to different types of organisation are a related problem. An extreme example is that of Tanzania, which has seven different laws depending on the organisation type. India has a law, more than 100 years old, that lumps together very different organisational forms, while our contributions from the Democratic Republic of Congo's Conseil National des ONGD de Développement and from Fiji and Guinea tell us that the law has lagged behind the development and growing size of CSOs. In Nepal, a 1977 law is irrelevant given the country's vastly changed political context since. The risk in such cases is that it leaves a lot open to interpretation, inviting political interference, and reducing transparency and predictability.

Further, it is sometimes the case that laws on paper are more enabling than the state's current political interpretation and implementation of them, as our contributions from the Dominican Republic's Alianza ONG and the Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV) suggest is the case. Our contribution from Cape Verde states:

"Problems do not arise from the quality of the existent legal framework, but from its practical application."

They go on to draw attention to:

"The weak institutional capacity of most CSOs and the lack of a clear and permanent framework for dialogue between civil society and the state..."

ICNL also suggests some more positive, enabling legislative acts, including laws to simplify CSO registration and improve access to resources in Afghanistan and Ukraine, and the establishment of an independent commission to draft an enabling law on associations, with civil society consultation, in Libya. There is a corresponding need to document and share examples of good practice.

It is important to continue to work on these issues, and they remain a core concern of CIVICUS. At the same time, we need to be clear that the enabling environment is about more than the political and legal space for civil society. The danger with narratives about shrinking political and legal space for civil society is that, while they are compelling and help to attract headlines about the difficulties of civil society operating in restricted spaces, they could also ultimately be disempowering. Sometimes in our efforts to call attention to the many countries where civil society faces restriction, we risk painting an overly simplistic picture of a world where governments are monolithic and all-powerful and civil society must always battle against the repression of minimum standards.

The challenge this implies for organisations and networks that campaign for civil society rights, including CIVICUS, is to go further than seeking the upholding of minimal standards, and decrying breaches in these. There is a need to promote greater recognition of higher standards that go beyond minimum provisions, and to foster dialogue about ways of moving closer towards these: to be more aspirational and offer a counter-vision.

Towards an enabling legal framework

In an enabling environment, CSO formation and operation should be facilitative rather than obstructive. The acquisition of legal status should be voluntary, and based on objective criteria. Registration should not be a prerequisite for access to universal rights of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. CSO laws should be clear and well-defined. The registration process should be quick, easy and inexpensive. There should be a defined and reasonable time limit for registration decisions and written justifications for denials of status, which should be open to appeal. All acts and decisions affecting CSOs should be subject to fair administrative or independent judicial review. Reporting procedures for small, provincial, community-based organisations and alliances should be as simple as possible.[25]

It is against this backdrop that CIVICUS welcomes the March 2013 landmark adoption of the UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Protecting Human Rights Defenders,[26] as a vital step for creating a safer and more enabling environment for CSOs and human rights defenders.[27] The resolution calls on states to ensure that registration requirements for CSOs are non-discriminatory, expeditious and inexpensive and allow for the possibility of appeal. It further calls on governments to ensure that reporting requirements for CSOs "do not inhibit functional autonomy."

d. Government, politics and relations with civil society

While work on an enabling legal and policy framework is important, attempts to improve the conditions in which civil society works also require a nuanced understanding of political events and forces, and particularly of relationships between governments and CSOs. It is hard to envisage an enabling environment existing in contexts where there are high levels of political polarisation, or poor relations between governments and CSOs. While the laws that affect civil society can remain over some time, the interpretation of these laws is heavily influenced by politics, particularly in countries where the workings of democracy are hampered, there is inadequate separation of powers and the executive is the dominant power.

Political polarisation and civil society

Our contribution from Venezuela sets out how the dominance of the ruling party over all spheres, and the propagation of a state ideology, cut across the rule of law and the legal provisions to uphold conditions for civil society. In Cambodia, the strong control of the Cambodian People's Party over all aspects of government is recognised as underlining the need for a strong and coordinated civil society in response.

Several contributions to our report draw attention to attacks in political rhetoric on CSOs and civil society activists, for example in India and Venezuela, and in recent years in Canada, heightened since the 2011 election that moved the right of centre government from minority to majority status. It seems in Canada there is a push to brand CSOs that engage in advocacy and human rights work as pursuing a radical, disruptive agenda with the consequence being defunding, loss of legal status and public denigration. Language itself is being redefined: activism is now used by politicians as a pejorative term. Over the last three years, the Canadian civil society network Voices-Voix identified at least 115 instances of such political attacks, about half of which were directed at CSOs and human rights defenders.

The danger is that political attacks on CSOs can drive self-censorship, weaken public trust and make the environment more permissive for other, more substantial attacks.

Activists under attack

In their extreme form, disenabling conditions take the form of extra-legal attacks, including physical attacks on and assassinations of civil society staff, volunteers and activists. In its contribution, Front Line Defenders reported on 24 human rights defenders (HRDs) who were killed during 2012, while at

least 12 journalists were murdered in Somalia alone in 2012. HRDs were physically attacked in some 28 countries. Front Line Defenders also lists cases of judicial harassment in almost 40 countries in 2012. Particular kinds of civil society actors disproportionately experience threat. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) defenders are particularly vulnerable in many countries. Aggravating the situation is the reality that killings and physical attacks are often followed by impunity and a failure to investigate and convict perpetrators.

Attacks can come from a number of sources, which are not necessarily confined to agencies of the state. They can come from non-state actors, such as corporations and organised crime, and from forces in government that can enjoy power beyond the scope of elected politicians, such as the military and police forces. Military and police groups often enjoy impunity. There may be links to corruption and to criminal gangs that have covert corporate, state and military connections. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, militant groups largely beyond state control offer a particular threat. A source of pressure on the conditions for civil society in India comes from both the Maoist Naxalite violent militants and government response to them. In areas where tensions between these forces exist, civil society work meets with more restriction, and CSO personnel can be targeted for violence; in the minds of the public and government, there is also a risk of confusion between legitimate civil society activity and insurgency.

Russia and the interplay between informal civic activism and attacks on organised civil society

Political shifts can offer opportunities to push for change, and also dangers. Clearly the assault on Russian civil society has increased in its ferocity since Putin was re-elected to the presidency in March 2012, in part triggered by wide-scale public protest in response to an election widely considered flawed at best, fraudulent at worst.

Many in civil society globally are rightly concerned about whether there is a sufficiently strong connection between apparently spontaneous protest movements and formal CSOs. Nevertheless, some governments clearly see one, and government response to mass protest sometimes includes attacking the space both for individual activists – as was the case with Russia's harsh sentencing of Pussy Riot members - and also for CSOs.

As well as attempts to smear CSOs that receive foreign funding, discussed further below, the Russian government's response to protest has included the introduction of new laws on libel and defamation to make campaigning work harder, and tightening of the law on public meetings and demonstrations.

One source of threat on which there is growing understanding is the shadowy connections that can exist between transnational corporations and politicians, particularly with agricultural, extractive and construction industries. In many developing countries, communities that traditionally relied on rivers, forests and communal lands are being displaced as corporations make deals with governments to acquire environmental resources. Environmental, land rights and indigenous rights activists are therefore seen as a political and economic threat to these interests. Responses can include the introduction of legislative restriction, as seems to be the motivation behind the recent introduction of the bill in Indonesia; the abuse of the judicial system to arrest and detain activists, as happened in 2012 with land rights activists in Cambodia;[28] and physical attacks and assassinations of activists, as was the case, to give just one example from several, with Miller Angulo Rivera, who defended the rights of a forcibly displaced population in Colombia, and who was murdered in December 2012.[29]

Environmental, land rights and indigenous rights activists seem to be at particular risk in Latin America, and PEN International reports that there is also a high level of danger in Latin America for writers, journalists and bloggers, who, they remind us, are an important part of civil society:

"Writers have an audience, a readership, and an influence in their society. Writers and artists play a unique role in civil society as both amplifiers of diverse viewpoints and influencers."

In 2012 PEN International monitored more than 800 cases of attacks against writers in 108 countries.

Trade unionists are another part of civil society who are particularly vulnerable to attack and restriction in some contexts. Here again, there seems to be a particular risk in Latin America, suggesting a special need to focus intervention and awareness-raising efforts on this region. The International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) 2012 survey of violations of trade union rights indicated that 50 of the 75 trade unionists who were murdered in 2011 were from Latin America. The survey also pointed out that a disproportionately high percentage of trade unionists experiencing threats of some kind (69.8%), imprisonment (61.8%) and arrests (74.8%) were from Latin America.

The situation for trade unionists in Swaziland is also particularly difficult, as our contribution from ITUC makes clear. The country ruled by Africa's last absolute monarch has been in a perpetual


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state of declared emergency since 1973. In 2012, a number of Swazi trade unionists were prevented from protesting, and detained and arrested. May Day celebrations were also blocked, while other trade unionists received international travel bans. In Turkey, almost 70 members of the trade union federation were in detention by the end of 2012.

Impunity for those who commit attacks can feed self-censorship and exert a chilling effect on civil society, noted by contributors to our report to be the case in Azerbaijan and Sri Lanka, among other countries. One of the enduring challenges is the lack of follow-up actions to investigate killings of or attacks on activists. In this respect, a potentially welcome new development in Mexico, where a state war on drug gangs has seen civil society activists too often caught in the crossfire, is a law to establish independent investigation units for the killing of writers and journalists, although as yet it still lacks adequate regulations and protocols to be applied.

In response, Front Line Defenders suggests that steps to improve the environment for civil society activists should include new civil society protection mechanisms to defend and support activists, new multilateral processes to challenge impunity, and greater pressure from more progressive governments and donors on regimes that frequently commit offences.

The UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Protecting Human Rights Defenders, mentioned above, offers new hope. The Resolution calls on states to guarantee that national regulations and legislation affecting human rights defenders are clearly defined and consistent with international human rights law. It further calls on governments to refrain from acts of reprisals, including subjecting peaceful demonstrators to excessive or indiscriminate use of force, arbitrary arrest or detention, torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, enforced disappearance and abuse of criminal and civil proceedings. We need also to refer back, and hold governments to, the commitments set out in the 1998 Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which sets out the minimum standards that should be guaranteed to human rights defenders.[30]

The politics of aid

In many countries that provide donor funding, political shifts and the increased volatility of politics in response to economic crisis have led to governments reducing, narrowing or refocussing ODA, a vital source of support for some CSOs in developing countries. After an all time high in 2010, ODA dropped in 2011. One trend here is the apparent strengthening of links between ODA and domestic trade and foreign affairs agendas. At the same time, there seems to be a move towards reintegrating previously autonomous development agencies into foreign ministries, as in New Zealand and, as announced in early 2013, Canada.

More positively in the aid sphere, there are some interesting examples of cross-government approaches to be tracked. Contributors Jacqueline Wood and Karin Fällman draw attention to the Civil Society Network created within Australia's aid agency, AusAid, that shares information and learning between different staff who connect with civil society. AusAid also placed a staff member at the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to create closer learning links with approaches to domestic civil society, potentially valuable in light of a push to streamline domestic CSOs' regulatory obligations, They also note that Sweden's aid agency, Sida, has established a similar internal network on civil society for headquarters and embassies as part of a wider 'whole of government' approach, while Denmark's Danida designates civil society focal points in some embassies. In Luxembourg, regular dialogue sessions are held between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CSOs on issues such as Luxembourg's aid commitments and the operational requirements of its support for CSOs. There are of course still questions about how well such approaches work in practice, and the extent to which they strengthen civil society capacity. In 2012, India introduced greater coordination of its international assistance programmes through the Development Partnership Administration: the hope is that this will make India's international development agenda clearer and, for civil society, easier to engage with and influence.

In looking at the politics of international aid from a civil society perspective, we should also be sensitive to the critique of the 'import model' of civil society where, following a sudden political shift, such as a revolution, history has shown there is a tendency for civil society forms to be introduced, with help from donors, that mimic those in donor countries. Many of these introduced forms of civil society fail, including for the reason that conditions for their work can quickly become hostile, and failure can challenge the trust in and credibility of civil society in such contexts.[31] Rather than simply supporting the setting up of organisations through the provision of funds, a focus on the enabling environment would tell us that there is a need to focus on developing enabling conditions, which take direction from and encourage rooted, indigenous and popular civil society forms to establish and grow.

Conflict and disasters: dynamic contexts

Violent conflict, and large-scale disasters, can shift the context for civil society quickly and dramatically. They are quite common. Our contribution from the SISA Centre for Corporate Partnership and Head of Secretariat of the Africa CSO Platform on Principled Partnership states that 60 countries are currently

experiencing some kind of conflict between the state and a section of society. While political contestation is part of legitimate democratic practice, conflict, particularly violent conflict, adds complexity and can be disenabling. CSOs can find themselves under attack from different sides in a conflict. When the state is perceived by a section of society to be unable to deliver its basic functions adequately, civil society often finds itself in the position of substituting for the state, for example, in the continuance of basic services. This is a valuable role that civil society plays, but in polarised settings it creates that risk that CSOs will be seen to take sides.

As our AGNA partner, the Pakistan National Forum reports, there has been a significant shift in the relations between CSOs and government in Pakistan, particularly in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and the Balochistan areas, in response at least partly to a high level of internal conflict. Permission is required from the military for CSOs to operate in those areas, and aid workers frequently come under attack in several provinces in Pakistan.

Conflict inhibits economic and social development and erodes development gains. Violent conflict also brings distrust, low social cohesion, and the abandonment of norms and values, as can the aftermath of disasters. They thus inhibit participation and can fuel polarisation between different civil society actors, all of which can contribute to a disenabling environment for civil society.

As we set out in our previous State of Civil Society report, sudden events, such as disasters and conflicts, can also create opportunities for civil society to act with responsibility and fill governance deficits, as well as plug service provision gaps. Writing before rebel forces overthrew the president, our contribution from Central Conseil Inter ONG de Centrafrique, of the Central African Republic, pointed to a changed attitude to civil society that was perhaps too little, too late:

"As we are in a country in conflict, the government has begun to understand that only civil society can help the different parties to see clearly and to raise up the voice of the voiceless."

The interaction between conflict and the enabling environment would seem to be two-way: the more opportunities there are for peaceful platforms and spaces for the articulation of different viewpoints and dialogue, and for participation - i.e. for a more enabled civil society - the lesser would seem to be the potential for conflict and violence. Post-conflict and peace-building processes should therefore focus on strengthening aspects of the enabling environment, such as rebuilding trust and connections between people, and addressing polarisation and the lack of platforms for participation. This requires investing in civil society, and in bringing different parts of civil society together. In post-conflict settings, there may also be need to rebuild a culture of constitutionalism, and invest in constitution-building processes that help develop a more enabling environment for civil society. Further, more research and analysis needs to be done on the environment for civil society in contexts of fragility, both on the ways in which enduring fragility impacts on the environment for civil society and on the ways in which a more enabling environment could contribute to greater resilience.

Dynamics between different kinds of CSOs also should be acknowledged in post-conflict, and post-disaster, settings. In such contexts, CSOs tend to occupy a humanitarian and essential services role, but the challenges include those of maintaining neutrality, and of unbalanced relationships between large-scale international humanitarian CSOs, which tend to command profile and have access to significant resources, and smaller, local CSOs.

This is of course an issue more broadly: our contributions from the Central African Republic, Guinea and Nepal tell us that cooperation between international and local CSOs is limited in their contexts, characterised by what is in effect unfair competition. InterAction, in its contribution, suggests some elements of good practice that could be helpful here, recognising those US humanitarian CSOs that:

"...make long-term commitment, acquire a deep understanding of local societies, employ largely local staff and design projects with community participation and cultural sensitivity to ensure sustainability."

In post-conflict settings in particular, the vital work of rebuilding trust, relationships and spaces needs local civil society participation, not least to rebuild trust and confidence within civil society itself. Donor inflows that only go through large international CSOs in post-conflict and post disaster contexts will do little to develop local civil society capacity.

The politics of policy dialogue

Advocacy and policy-oriented CSOs face a particular challenge of how to take sufficient interest in and engage robustly with the political sphere without being seen to be partisan or playing into the hands of political critics. In two-party or multi-party contexts, CSOs need to try to engage positively with parties both in government and opposition, without being seen to be taking sides and actively seeking to change an incumbent government, as our contribution from the Central African Republic reports has been the case:

"When civil society adopts a position on an issue that is similar to that of the opposition, it is considered to be the extension of the opposition. If civil society's position is similar to that of the government, the opposition believes that civil society is an appendix of power."

Some contributions to our report recognise that the culture of political dialogue, especially between civil society and government, still needs to be built and encouraged in countries with little democratic heritage, such as Azerbaijan, Belarus and Russia. The task is not only one of developing space and processes for constructive dialogue in the political sphere, but also of developing respect for pluralism and of moving away from the 'winner takes all' politics that also characterise many sub-Saharan African contexts, where the expression of oppositional viewpoints is branded as disloyal rather than a contribution to healthy debate. In Turkey, TUSEV suggests that outdated perceptions about civil society need to be challenged as well:

"CSOs in Turkey should not only be perceived as charity or service providing organisations, but their legitimacy as rights-based organisations which engage in awareness raising and advocacy activities should also be recognised. This change in perception regarding CSOs is necessary to engage CSOs in all levels of policy and decision-making processes."

Civil society plays multiple roles. We bring people together. We encourage debate, dialogue and consensus building. We research, analyse, document, publish and promote knowledge and learning. We develop, articulate and seek to advance solutions to problems. We engage with people and organisations in other spheres, such as government and business, to try to advance and implement solutions. We directly deliver services to those who need them. Sometimes we do all of these things at once. We need to assert that these are all legitimate civil society roles.

We need, in our own analysis and strategies, to take a similarly disaggregated approach to government. As noted in our contribution from Reality of Aid Africa, different departments may have different attitudes, as may the individual ministers and officials within these:

"The value of CSO participation in policy formulation processes seems to be better understood and appreciated within some specific departments... Some government departments see CSOs as partners in both policy development and service provision. For others, CSOs are seen as a potential agent for outsourcing some government services, but for others still they are mere noisemakers."

In governments, ministers often come and go fairly rapidly. However, officials can be entrenched. These kind of relationships between elected and appointed officials need to be better examined and understood.

We must understand that governments contain a range of levers and opportunities, as well as sources of challenge. In Europe and North America, although the donor agencies of government often show greater identification with civil society than other parts of government, they are usually not particularly powerful voices within government, and as mentioned above, in a number of contexts we are currently seeing their status downgraded or challenged.

We should also bear in mind that in some contexts different forms of governance exist side by side. Our contribution on participatory governance in Pacific island countries highlights the role of traditional authorities in policy-making processes. Traditional authorities enjoy high public trust, but there are gaps between traditional systems and modern governance structures, as well as with civil society, which need to be bridged in order to improve collaborative decision-making.

Towards better CSO-government relations and democratic ownership

We should call attention to examples of government good practice in improving the engagement of civil society and promoting democratic ownership when these arise, as potential examples of contributions towards a more enabling environment. Countries in Eurasia are generally acknowledged to have among the worst environments for civil society, but the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, in its contribution, details the creation of Public Watch Councils (PWCs), which were established by Presidential Decree in 2012. The contributor highlights the dual roles of PWCs:

"...the activities of the PWCs were guided by the following two main functions: a consultative role (give recommendations to a state body on improvement of its work, offering an alternative strategy or mechanism, and holding public hearings); and a watchdog role (monitoring the use of the budget and other funds, the conduct of tendering processes, and compliance with legislation by the state)."

The PWCs enable the civil society personnel who are represented on them to hold state bodies more accountable. They represent an innovation that, while naturally still leaving areas for improvement, should be engaged with, tracked and documented. There is of course a need for continual oversight and analysis, particularly to ensure any such positive recognition is not used by governments to legitimise other

less progressive aspects of their practice. This is an area where international networks, such as CIVICUS, need to help.

Contributors to our report recognise that some other governments are making efforts to improve relationships with civil society, and it is important to examine what mechanisms are offered to take engagements with governments beyond the ad hoc level. Our contribution from the Lithuanian national CSO platform, NGO Information and Support Centre, highlighted one apparently progressive mechanism. Since 2010, there has been a compact for CSO development, which has been approved by the government. The multi-stakeholder joint Commission for Coordination of NGO Affairs regularly convenes to discuss legal, financial and other topical issues, with representation of the national NGO coalition, formed in 2010 from 14 national associations covering all major thematic areas. In Guinea, the Platform of NGOs and Associative Movements (POME) exists as a representative and advisory body that is regularly consulted by the government.

We believe that good models of cooperation share characteristics: they are regular, they are transparent in their selection criteria for participants, they reach a diverse range of civil society, they reach across governments, they make information available to their participants and they exist over time, detached from party politics and electoral cycles. While the diversity of civil society should be recognised as a key asset, these examples also tend to show the value of forging common civil society voices to speak to government.

A potentially replicable idea on the part of governments, drawing from the examples from Australia and India mentioned above, would be to improve coordination and share good practice within governments on engagement with civil society, and particularly in donor countries, to make connections between good practice in engagement with domestic civil society, where this exists, and in support for civil society in developing countries. Networks of CSOs concerned with international development in donor countries could also connect better with CSO networks that concentrate on domestic civil society issues. But alongside this we need to seek direct and multiple entry channels for CSOs to engage with different parts of government as relevant, so that any coordinating bodies do not act as gatekeepers.

It is evident that governments and donors need to be held to account more closely for their responsibility to create a more enabling environment at the national level. This responsibility includes offering structured and institutionalised roles for civil society within government and donor policy development processes. Governments should acknowledge CSOs as civic actors in their own right and should interact with CSOs, based on principles of mutual trust, respect and shared responsibility.

e. Public attitudes and participation

There needs to be more research and analysis on economic influences on the environment for civil society, and how these play out in different contexts. The environment for civil society is also shaped by aspects of the physical environment, such as the geography of a country, its size and location, whether it is an island or landlocked and its changing climate. The extent and reach of its diaspora play a role also. These all interact in complex ways with social attitudes that can have deep and intertwined roots, influenced by culture and faith, and make each national context different. Here factors can include the strength and make-up of religious beliefs and competing beliefs, the existence of and relations between groups of different identity, culture, ethnicity, tribe and social class, and prevailing social mores about issues such as the status of women and tolerance of different groups, such as sexual minorities.

Gender, LGBTI, disability and discrimination

Social attitudes as well as political forces can affect the space for and viability of civil society groups and actions that make particular claims, such as those that attempt to empower women, address discrimination or seek equality on the basis of sexual identity or disability. They also provide us a pointer towards the broader environment for civil society: if a country cannot offer an enabling environment for women's rights organisations, it should tell us that something more broadly is wrong.

The evidence from contributions to our report tells us that in many contexts, something indeed is wrong. Women human rights defenders, and CSOs that seek to advance women rights, seem to be among the top targets for attacks on civil society. For example, the AWID reports that between 2010 and 2012, at least 24 women's human rights defenders were recorded as murdered in Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico alone, while one of 2012's most shocking moments came in the attempted assassination in Pakistan of 14-year old education activist Malala Yousafzai.

In Lithuania, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine, new laws, policies or initiatives were proposed or carried out in 2012 that would severely curtail LGBTI activism, while in Uganda attempts were made to reintroduce a notoriously anti-gay bill.[32] The 2012 International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association's State-Sponsored Homophobia report indicates that 78 countries out of 193 still have legislation criminalising same-sex consensual acts between adults.[33]

Further, our contribution from the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe reports that hate crime in Europe is

on the rise, a trend that points to more difficult conditions for civil society groups associated with particular identities that are targeted in hate crimes. According to data from two reports released by the EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights in November 2012, every one in four people of a minority or immigrant group in Europe has been a victim of a hate crime within the past year.[34]

A related issue on discrimination and marginalisation is the extent to which those organisations and individuals seeking to advance rights for marginalised groups, such as women and LGBTI people, and people with disabilities, are included in the mainstream of civil society itself. Our contribution from the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) suggests that the position is often unsatisfactory:

"...misconceptions, stigmas and stereotypes about disability as well as inaccessible environments create barriers for people with disabilities from attaining their right to full and equal participation in civil society."

As members of civil society, we need to take care not to consciously or unconsciously propagate paradigms of exclusion. There seems to be a real need for more analysis and promotion of the connections between CSOs and activists that are seeking rights for marginalised groups, and other parts of civil society.

One particularly complex area for analysis is the strength and roles of faith groupings. In most contexts, and consistent with our working definition of civil society, we would consider faith-based organisations and groupings as a valuable part of civil society, representing sources of social capital and community organisation and offering platforms for collective participation. Our contribution on participatory governance in the Pacific islands draws attention to the important role of the church, alongside traditional leaders, in people's lives.

The complicating issue is that religious institutions, particularly religious leaders, can also be powerful sources of non-progressive rhetoric that can cut across the efforts of other parts of civil society. For example, some contributions to our report see a connection between an apparent rise in religious fundamentalism in some countries and a heightened targeting of women's and LGBTI activism. Front Line Defenders reports fundamentalism affecting human rights defenders in Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan, where clerics made threats against women human rights defenders and CSOs working on women's human rights.[35] In some countries, governments seem unable to protect civil society groups that speak up against conservative social values, patriarchy and religious fundamentalism. As the contribution from AWID makes clear, fighting these attacks drains energy and resources that would otherwise be spent on advancing more progressive agendas.

Trust and participation

Public trust in civil society remains a key asset that should be considered part of the enabling environment. On most available data, such as the annual Edelman Trust Barometer, NGOs (to use the Barometer's terminology) have consistently scored higher levels of trust than governments, companies or the media, for the past five years.

Levels of public participation are another important factor that we need to track continually, including through such tools as the CIVICUS Civil Society Index. An enabling environment can be characterised as one that makes it easy for people to participate in diverse ways in a range of different civil society opportunities. This suggests that levels of public participation can offer one indicator of whether there is a sufficiently enabling environment.

But a note of caution should be struck here: mass participation in public protest events is, of course, also an indicator of dissatisfaction, which can include dissatisfaction with political and social exclusion and the inadequacy of formal channels of political participation. This was the case in many of the Arab Spring protests. Indeed, there are occasions when mass protest can be an indicator of a deficit in CSO response, poor routes into participation through existing civil society, or perceptions that CSOs do not offer a relevant platform for the articulation of a particular demand. These deficits can occur as a result of the kind of restrictions on CSOs discussed above.

Our contribution from SERI, a CSO based in South Africa, suggests that the burgeoning of local protests in South Africa is a sign that people do not see formal participation platforms as adequate. They found many CSOs wanting in their response to 2012's Marikana incident, when the police shot dead 34 striking miners. This gap points to a wider insufficient CSO response to significant socio-economic challenges in South Africa, and a disconnection between formal CSOs and the country's burgeoning local protest movements. They also draw attention to political manipulation of the criminal justice system and the relative weakness of CSOs in relation to the dominant party state and its political structures.

Large-scale protest movements offer a reminder that the environment for civil society is dynamic, and moments of sudden opportunity arise. Outbreaks of protest are volcanic and can create volatile new space, but after they are brought under control, it should not be assumed that the dissatisfaction that drove them has gone away. Perhaps the lost momentum of some of the headline protests of the last couple of years points to a need to invest in existing organised forms of civil society, and particularly actions that improve their conditions and connections, sooner, to maintain the momentum gained from mass protest and address the grievances behind protests.

Looking for local tipping points

There is little civil society can do to change a country's geography. For example, small island states face particular issues of vulnerability, including high exposure to the impacts of natural disasters, unequal relationships with stronger neighbours and a particular reliance on diasporas.

However, we do need to take locally specific factors such as these into account when we seek to understand and improve the environment for civil society. To some extent, they can define the space available and the best intervention methods, and remind us that the knowledge of local civil society is a key asset. They also prompt the recognition that forces other than government, politicians, donors and civil society can influence the conditions for civil society. While it is essential to hold onto global norms such as those enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights, the existence of locally specific factors suggest that global standards for a civil society enabling environment must be sufficiently adaptable to local realities, cultures and attitudes. An ideal environment for civil society will be one that blends global standards with an understanding of local nuances.

What this suggests, from the point of view of strategy, is that civil society, and civil society stakeholders, in seeking to influence the enabling environment, need to identify not only the most important things they wish to influence, but also the places and moments where there is most opportunity to make change. These must be context-specific, linked to moments of what may be fast-moving opportunity and the levels of work at which action is possible. The more we understand of national and sub-national context, the better. It is also important for progressive civil society activists striving for positive social change in challenging environments to work with respected social and political actors that are likely to influence others, in order to reach a tipping point at which broader society is more likely to embrace change.

It should be understood here that while it is important to understand public attitudes, even seemingly entrenched attitudes can be dynamic and can be challenged: they are not necessarily dead weights against change. It may be a question of reading when the moment is right. For example, in two generations the position of lesbian and gay people in the UK has progressed, recently very quickly, from criminalisation to a parliamentary vote in favour of gay marriage, with opinion poll data showing public attitudes that are largely accepting of same-sex partnerships, in stark contrast to widespread stigmatisation in the past.[36]

f. Corruption

It is much harder for civil society to operate properly in conditions where there is a high level of corruption.

INTRAC's contribution to our report uses the example of the anti-corruption movement in India to highlight the multifaceted impact of corruption, as well as the need for a broad response. It says of the movement:

"It cut across traditional divisive lines of caste, class, ethnicity and religion. People across these lines realised that corruption affects everyone in society, from the poorest peasant who cannot access a government employment scheme, to a middle class family expected to pay a bribe to get their daughter into college, to the large company where corruption adds unacceptable costs to their transactions."

Corruption is so pervasive that in some contexts it makes it difficult for civil society to work in conventional ways. For example, our contributor from the Democratic Republic of Congo simply states:

"It is difficult to give a comprehensive response in a country where corruption has reached the level of no return and where bad governance has become a management system."

Our contribution from a Ugandan social development specialist explores the impact of corruption on the interaction between civil society, government and donors. It is acknowledged at an official level that there is a high level of corruption among state officials and politicians, as documented in Auditor General's reports. This has caused donors to freeze support and the government to recognise corruption as a serious problem.

The question then arises as to why there is not more common ground between CSOs and government in tackling the issue, given an apparently shared problem diagnosis. Why then are Ugandan CSOs staging their 'Black Monday' weekly public anti-corruption campaigns being attacked? Our contributor notes that:

"[T]he stance of donors can be characterised as looking 'noble and appalled' by the extent of the corruption, while the government is evidently seeking to look tough and serious about capturing the culprits. CSOs seem to be the losers here: they stand on a slippery surface in a political and financing environment in which money seems to speak more than the rights of people to receive the development benefits due to them through government programmes."

What we seem to be seeing here is that one dysfunctional aspect of the environment for civil society in Uganda – strained relationships and apparently growing distrust between CSOs and government – is inhibiting effective action on another area of dysfunction – corruption. In such settings, speaking out against corruption can be a risky act for civil society activists, as Faustin Ndikumana, head of a CSO that advocates transparency and accountability in Burundi found out when he was detained for two weeks in February 2012.[37]

Our contribution from Guinea further makes a connection between poor governance and financial support, which has repercussions for CSOs:

"...the Republic of Guinea spent nearly 10 years on the bench of insolvent countries mainly due to bad governance. During these years, technical and financial partners have been very shy in financing CSOs."

Freedom from corruption as part of the enabling environment

For an enabling environment to exist, there must a low level of corruption among officials of the state, business, politicians and other social actors, including civil society personnel themselves. Open and timely access to information and transparent accountability mechanisms and processes are necessary. It should be easy to expose corruption, including through investigative journalism, and instances of corruption should be addressed through the criminal justice system, without political interference.

g. Communications and technology

If one of our concerns in promoting and seeking to enable civil society is to encourage space for public debate and dialogue, and the articulation of solutions, then naturally we need to take an interest in communication. The extent to which civil society can communicate, including through internet and mobile technology, is another important aspect of the environment for civil society.

Threats to online civic space

The role of the information and communications technology (ICTs) in people's mobilisations such as the Arab Spring has been much discussed, not least in our previous State of Civil Society report. We have seen the multiple value of online communication for civil society, including for the exercise of social accountability; the crowdsourcing of activism, including through platforms such as Avaaz, and the formation of new civil society communities online; the enabling of international solidarity; the real-time organisation of offline protest; and citizen journalism, among others. Our contributors from Finland, Kepa and Kehys, also call attention to the role of ICTs in providing new channels of engagement with civil society, politicians and civil servants.

The darker side of the online world also should be acknowledged here. Our contribution from the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, as mentioned above, sets out how the internet and social media are being used as mechanisms to propagate hate speech and incite hate crimes. The response of the Advisory Council of Youth, underlining the role of the internet as a key arena for contestation, has been to spearhead a youth-led campaign, 'Young People Combating Hate Speech Online', to promote social and cultural tolerance and inclusion.

As our contribution from the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) points out, online access continues to grow, including through mobile phones. The internet has created new platforms for self-expression, but in turn this has created new vulnerability risks for those who use these platforms. As APC states:

"The revolutions in North Africa have shown how social media can be an ally in the organisation and mobilisation of people, but also how authoritarian regimes use the internet to counter progressive social and political change."

A few of many recent examples include arrests and imprisonment for tweeting and blogging, including of civil society leader Nabeel Rajab in Bahrain, and also of activists in Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates; infamous and continuing internet censorship in China; interruption of SMS services in India; and tracking of cybercafé users in South Korea. Ethiopian blogger Eskinder Nega received an 18-year prison sentence after becoming unpopular with the repressive government, apparently for writing a series of pieces on the Arab Spring. APC cites that about 32% of all users have experienced some kind of national-level restriction, and over 45 states have imposed restrictions of some kind.

The danger is that new international norms on internet control are being steadily and stealthily established, justified by references to security and crime, and exercised through such means as surveillance, censorship and blocking of access. A related emerging area for alarm is the interaction between governments and businesses in internet control. Governments often find service, content and platform providers compliant

in requests to block and filter content. Internet freedom should therefore represent a growing area of interest for civil society and those who seek to support civil society.

We have also seen welcome citizen activism to protect online civic space. Freedom House's 2012 Freedom on the Net report notes that stringent opposition by concerned citizens in Europe to the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) prompted governments to back away from ratifying the treaty.[38] Our Estonian AGNA member, the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organisations, reports that non-formal networks of like-minded people such as the 'Estonian Internet Community' played a crucial role in opposing ACTA. In the US, 2012 protests by civil society, in conjunction with advocacy by technology companies that included the synchronised blacking out of websites such as Wikipedia, helped stop the passage of Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA).

Internet governance, however, remains an opaque area and beyond the everyday concerns of many CSOs. The scope for civil society participation in decision-making forums on internet governance is very limited, and expanding this should be an area for collective advocacy. Rather than focussing on restriction, legislation should seek to enable access and promote the internet's public role and global commons nature. One new campaigning tool that provides a potential rallying point is PEN International's 2012 Declaration on Digital Freedom.[39]

Making meaningful messages through mainstream media

Engagement with conventional media remains as important a question as ever before, with the line between conventional media and the internet being increasingly blurred as media organisations have moved into digital platforms. In spite of the rise of the internet, a handful of large companies continue to own the bulk of the media landscape, as our report's joint contribution from the Inter Press Service (IPS) and the Citizen Lab makes clear. The diversity of voices continues to be limited, with viewpoints from large and developed countries dominating news and commentary media.

There are also success stories in civil society advocacy for media reform, and there is a need to share successful experiences, and encourage more CSOs to take an interest in issues of media ownership and access to media platforms. This is an area where our contributors suggest closer engagement with academia would bring benefit, as here there is solid expertise and research. For example, the Argentinian media law, which assigns 30% of the airwaves to community media, has its origins in a draft formed by a CSO/academia partnership.

No communications infrastructure can benefit CSOs unless we in civil society are media-savvy. This applies to both new and traditional media. As discussed in our previous State of Civil Society report, there has been a failure by many traditional CSOs to capitalise on the mobilising power of new media, mimicking continuing inadequacies in approaches to offline media. The joint contribution by IPS and the Citizen Lab attributes this partly to the fact that:

"Social media and blogging platforms, by privileging an individualistic approach to communication, are sometimes at odds with the ways in which organised civil society traditionally communicates."

This is not the only area of civil society difficulty here. In civil society we seem resigned to the fact that matters of importance to us will not attract mainstream media coverage. However, we cannot attribute this only to media bias. Our contributors point to the poor quality of many traditional CSO communications tools, such as press releases, the lack of follow up in communications and an absence of collaboration between CSOs to make strategic joint contributions. There is a need for CSOs to develop capacity to adapt messages to the characteristics and needs of different information channels.

An enabling communications environment

An enabling environment for civil society should see fair access for civil society voices to media platforms. Given the value of online civic space, citizen activists and CSOs should continue to lobby governments and internet companies to ensure that restrictions on websites and social media do not violate the parameters of international law. Citizen activists and CSOs need to demand that their national telecommunications infrastructure and service providers guarantee affordable mobile and internet access for all. This needs to be underpinned by guarantees of media freedom and freedom of information, and the protection of investigative journalists, bloggers and others who expose wrongdoing.

h. Resources

Resourcing is another key feature of the environment in which civil society operates. An enabling resourcing environment could be defined as one that supports the creation and sustaining of multiple resourcing streams for the self-determined programmes and priorities of civil society in its diverse forms, including from sources other than donor agencies, such as from citizens and communities in a CSO's own country.

The legal and regulatory environment for civil society financing

The question of resourcing is clearly connected with that of the legal and regulatory environment discussed above. The law is sometimes skewed towards the granting of tax concessions to charitable acts and service delivery, but not for civil society work that may have more of a political edge. Our contributors tell us is the case in India and Turkey, where TUSEV indicates that:

"Tax exemptions and public benefit statuses are granted to a very limited number of CSOs through the Council of Ministers decision. Therefore, this decision which must be unbiased and objective in nature becomes extremely political, and the privileges it provides are very limited."

It seems an enduring fact that some types of CSOs, such as those that mostly have a policy, human rights or advocacy focus, struggle to raise domestic resources and therefore rely significantly on funding from sources in other countries. Attempts to limit the foreign funding supply to such CSOs have therefore become a tactic for governments that seek to silence civil society critics. According to ICNL data, measures have been taken within the past 12 years to restrict access to foreign funding in Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Nepal, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.[40] In Ethiopia, it remains the case that CSOs that receive more than 10% of funding from foreign sources are not allowed to undertake advocacy or human rights work. In October 2012, Ethiopia's supreme court upheld the freezing of the assets of two of the country's last functioning human rights CSOs.[41]

ICNL suggests that there is a 'contagion effect' with governments following influential examples set by others, including in draft laws that limit receipt of foreign funding in Malaysia and Pakistan, and the expansion of existing restrictions in Bangladesh and Egypt.[42] In Pakistan, the politician behind a draft law to limit foreign funding explicitly referenced Egypt's restrictions as good practice. The concern is that regressive international norms are being established.

Severe measures were recently introduced or threatened in Russia.[43] In what seems a clear move to discredit CSOs and undermine their trust among the public, CSOs receiving foreign funding are now required to register and report themselves as 'foreign agents'. This was accompanied by the expulsion of the US aid agency USAID from Russia in October 2012. In response to these measures, CSOs in Russia are fighting back, including through boycotting registration as foreign agents and bringing their case to national and international courts.

We can draw hope from one recent successful example of a civil society response, in the Dominican Republic. Our AGNA partner, Alianza ONG, reports that the government tabled a law that attempted to impose new taxes on CSOs and reduce their tax benefits. Accepting the rationale of civil society groups of the importance of tax exemptions in financing their work, the national congress rejected the government's proposal.

Political and economic shifts and civil society resources

Attacks in political rhetoric often use funding sources to discredit CSOs, in tactics that seem deliberately to conflate the receipt of donor funding from a country with promotion of that country's viewpoints. Canadian CSOs working on environmental issues have been branded as puppets of the US foundations from which they receive financial support, and Venezuelan CSOs receiving US funding dismissed as servants of empire and profit-seekers.

What seems a current and growing preoccupation by governments with CSOs' funding arrangements has led to the disenabling conditions of unpredictability and volatility. In 2012, over 4,000 Indian CSOs had their permits to receive foreign funding withdrawn. Abrupt withdrawal of federal government funding to CSOs in Brazil for a period in 2011 demonstrated the vulnerability of CSOs to this volatility.

In some donor countries, resourcing shifts include the withdrawal of previously long-standing support to domestic CSOs that champion international development causes, and renewed questioning of the role of such CSOs in development, as we have seen recently in countries such as Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand. In Canada the government abruptly withdrew funding for organisations engaged in policy development and advocacy, after more than 40 years of support in some cases. CSOs in developed countries that champion development have faced funding cuts in the past years, noted by our AGNA partners the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Lithuanian NGO Information and Support Centre.

There is a debate to be had about the extent to which CSOs in developed countries are effective channels to help ODA flow towards poor people in developing countries, and about the continuing role of CSOs in donor countries as development intermediaries in times when technology is offering new ways of making connections and transferring resources between countries.[44] We should also be aware of the potentially negative effects of a significant reduction in ODA channelled through Northern CSOs, which could include a loss of solidarity between developed country CSOs and developing country CSOs, and of development awareness in developed countries. As our contributors Jacqueline Wood and Karin Fällman tell us:

"It is... time for collective thought and experimentation within existing modalities and with alternative, complementary models, realising that the use of one modality does not exclude the other. An honest and comprehensive overview of the relative advantages of direct and indirect funding to developing country CSOs is required, avoiding the risk of undermining CSO-CSO relationships or creating unnecessary competition, but taking account of the current reality of the state and aspirations of developing country civil society."

There also seems to be a growing tendency for government donors to provide direct support to developing country governments, often pooling their approaches to do so, as reported for example in The Central African Republic , Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia.

While justifications for such practices make reference to the need for aid efficiency, they impact on the resourcing position and status of CSOs, which can transition from receiving funding directly from and dialoguing with donors to being in the position of asking donor-supported national governments for financial support. As we heard from RESOCIDE in Burkina Faso, this is not a promising scenario for the autonomy of civil society, and a disempowering one in countries where governments and CSOs have poor relationships.

CSOs can often be seen as competitors for resources, and in some countries governments still have a sense that national development frameworks should trump other development approaches, and that donor funds when applied to CSOs should still align with government development frameworks. For example, our contribution from the Democratic Republic of Congo tells us that:

"Despite the existence of the Paris Declaration, the country is trying to organise, coordinate and analyse development assistance at the ministry level..."

Our contributors tell us that we are also seeing changes in the ways in which donors make their funds available to CSOs, which implies an altered relationship. In India, our contributor states that most access to government projects is now through open tendering, an unrealistic prospect for many smaller CSOs. A switch from the giving of grants to the provision of fees for services, which our contribution from InterAction notes to be happening in the US, implies less a relationship of equals and more of an authority-contractor relationship. InterAction's contribution tells us:

"InterAction members report that USAID field missions often view all US NGOs as implementers to be tightly controlled rather than true partners with expertise and experience in their own right. This is reflected in increasingly prescriptive funding solicitations, mandates to insist on preferred NGO staffing structures and overly burdensome reporting requirements."

Further, a case is still pending in the American Supreme Court about whether US CSOs receiving USAID funding should promote US government views, a notion which can only play into the hands of critics of CSOs that receive US funding. Straightforward grant-giving to CSO programmes is reported as having become rare in Canada as well as the US.

Influences here seem to be not merely the global economic crisis, but also the political response to it. Further, we need to ask whether a high focus on the MDGs in recent years has ushered in a drift back towards technical and quantitative target-driven approaches to development, after a period at the end of the last century when development was beginning to be understood as more about enabling of participatory governance to unlock local solutions and actions. A further key weakness of the MDG framework is that it did not mandate a specific role for CSOs in the delivery of its goals and targets, meaning CSOs have had to seek participation where possible, rather than have it as a right. A drive for efficiency, 'value for money' and visible deliverables, while understandable, not least in a context where development funding may need to be justified to sceptical donor country publics living with public service cuts[45] and increased unemployment,[46] suggests a limiting of the innovation and possibility that civil society can bring.

Our contribution from a Ugandan social development specialist calls attention to the continuing problem that high donor dependency limits CSOs' autonomy and, to some extent, sets the parameters of operations of many CSOs and their outputs, demanding a priority on clearing donor hurdles. How can CSOs that are heavily donor dependent then assert their independence when dealing with government? Alongside these concerns there is the danger, when attacks on advocacy come at the same time as difficult funding conditions, that

the response will be pre-emptive self-censorship and a loss of critical voice and innovation on the part of civil society. Our report's contribution from the International Trade Union Confederation also notes a dampening effect of the economic crisis on the potential for trade union activism.

Tightening conditions and significant reductions in funding for CSO-determined programming should be seen as disenabling for civil society. Our contribution from the Reality of Aid Africa makes the point that donor frameworks imposed to manage funds tend to be about the minimisation of perceived risks rather than enabling CSOs to achieve more. One example from AWID of how to counteract heavy donor conditions shows the value of a collective civil society response: women's organisations came together to negotiate with the Dutch MDG3 fund, which agreed to adjust burdensome administrative and reporting requirements.

A further funding trend identified by our contributors from Brazil and the Dominican Republic is donor withdrawal from countries that are now assessed as middle-income countries, including those of the Caribbean and Latin America, even though there is growing awareness of the problems of severe income inequality within apparently wealthy and middle-income countries. As our contribution from INTRAC reflects:

"For some CSOs this change from being aided to unaided is leading to organisational closure, and for others a new focus and reflection on roles. By default, these debates are also now starting to be felt within the larger INGOs [international CSOs], who are simultaneously also withdrawing from some parts of the world, particularly in Latin America, but are still seeking a growth in their international brands."

Other apparent trends noted include the continuing uses by donors of developing country CSOs in instrumental ways without addressing underlying capacity issues; the use of local CSOs as recruiting grounds for international CSO and donor staff, which again creates capacity problems; and apparently creeping connection between the development and military spheres, for example in the US.

Bridging the civil society-private sector divide

Compared to civil society, from some of our contributions emerges a sense that private sector is often privileged by governments and donors. Is more attention being paid to the enabling environment for business than for civil society? We see, for example, many governments relaxing laws to encourage business at the same time as tightening them for civil society. There also remains a corresponding need to examine how the private sector can help to shape the environment for civil society, and to assess to what extent gains are made from partnering with the private sector.

A positive move in this regard may include India's recent stipulation that private companies spend 2% of their profits on corporate social responsibility. InterAction also suggests that there needs to be more civil society inclusion in public-private partnerships:

"If the US is to truly maximise the contributions of CSOs to development, it needs meaningfully to engage US NGOs in its public-private partnerships and major private sector initiatives."

Building resilient, diverse, local funding streams

The vulnerability of CSOs to the critique of being foreign agents suggests a need to find new ways of cracking the difficult challenge of securing sufficient domestic resourcing so that reliance on foreign support can be reduced. In countries with limited practice of domestic, individual philanthropy, and at a time when the effects of the global economic crisis are still being felt, this is hardly an easy task.

There are some examples of success set out in our contributions. CSOs in Estonia report that they are looking to diversify by turning to the private sector, income generating activities and social enterprises. Our contribution from Norway reports that two thirds of Norwegian civil society's income is self-generated, while our contribution from the Dominican Republic suggests that most CSO funding comes from income generation, indicating that they are developing sustainability mechanisms that others could learn from.

However, structural constraints in the legal and regulatory environment are a major impediment to the creation of stronger domestic funding mechanisms, as ABONG highlights is the case in Brazil. Given the funding constraints for CSOs described above, it is especially important to have legal and regulatory frameworks that encourage local philanthropy and offer favourable tax regimes for CSOs.

Possible further parts of the solution may lie in the building of common agendas with domestic CSOs engaged on other issues – for example, with CSOs engaged in offering services to the vulnerable, which are not necessarily seen as political, as suggested earlier in our contribution from Russia - or with the kinds of community philanthropy networks seen as emerging in a number of countries. Broad coalitions of diverse CSOs advocating for legislative reform may also help to address the stigma associated with receiving foreign funding for work in the political sphere.

The impact on civil society of legislation on the financing of terrorism

As Statewatch's contribution to our report points out, within six weeks of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, an opaque counter-terrorism financing framework had, with little debate, been added on top of existing international anti-money laundering measures, through UN Security Council Resolution 1373. Though there is little evidence that CSOs are to any significant extent being used as fronts for the financing of terrorism, these measures affect the ability of CSOs in developing countries to receive funding and make it harder for CSOs in developed countries to connect with their developing country partners. For example, extensive blacklisting of individuals makes financial transfers harder and risks reputational damage.

A compliance culture in financial institutions obstructs work and hampers rapid response, such as to conflict and disasters, through slowing the movement of resources, while CSO compliance itself uses up resources. The multilateral counter-terrorism financing regime has even placed pressure on governments to comply. For countries where the environment is dysfunctional, such as Turkey, compliance makes things worse; for governments that seek to repress civil society, countering terrorism financing offers another justification. Domestic legislation on the financing of terrorism has been used in Nicaragua and Venezuela to question resource flows to CSOs and justify their investigation.

Such measures help the designation of 'terrorist' to be misused, with little pressure on governments to prove accusations against individuals or CSOs. This can have a chilling effect on CSOs, particularly those that work in Islamic countries or undertake peace-building and post-conflict work, which sometimes demands working with groups that hold militant views.

Contradiction arose in 2012 when many donor governments were keen to support civil society follow up to the Arab Spring, but the global counter-terrorism agenda they had implemented made the transfer of resources to CSOs in many Middle East and North African countries much more difficult

There would seem to be a need in response to advocate for the current heavy and blanket approach to countering terrorism financing to be scaled back, for fundamental rights such as freedom of association and expression to be respected, and for more transparency and oversight. There is a clear need for a full assessment of the impacts caused by current domestic and international counter terrorism measures, taking into account the real risks and proportionality of these measures, and undertake reforms in legislation that would enable the legitimate movement of aid and humanitarian financing.

A related question is that of how to tap better into rich cultures of individual giving when these exist. There is a connection here with the participation dimension: our contribution from Japanese CSO platform the Japan Association of Charitable Organisations suggests that most people who volunteer in civil society in Japan also make monetary contributions to civil society. In countries that have a growing middle class, such as India and some Latin American countries, new opportunities to fundraise could be explored. Developing better funding links with diaspora communities, exploring the applicability of social enterprise models and using technology to crowd source funding may also be part of a response.

But despite these possible responses, we may have to accept that there seem few sustainable funding success stories, and there will always be a funding gap, particularly for CSOs that engage in policy, advocacy and human rights work. If we believe that having civil society is important, not least as a counterbalance to other forces such as government or the private sector, we may have to accept that we need to find ways of resourcing it. It is time to re-open a hard-headed conversation about how we finance the civil society we need.

At least from the point of view of stopping existing cuts in CSO funding, in its contribution CONCORD Europe argues that measures to address financial and fiscal crises in donor countries should be undertaken in ways that respect existing donor financial obligations as global actors in international development cooperation, minimising the impact of cuts on policies and programmes that address their relationship with civil society as effective actors in development.

Looking further forward, we need to re-examine donor rationales for supporting civil society and their methods for doing so. We need to promote the idea that the enhancement of the environment for civil society should be built into funding decisions, and included in the monitoring and evaluation of funding programmes. CSOs involved in the Busan processes called for a return to a diversity of funding methods, with increased core support for CSOs, including direct funding for CSOs in developing countries, innovative mechanisms that support CSO-determined priorities, and greater harmonisation of transaction costs in funding relationships. We would add to this that a greater variety of civil society, going beyond formal organisations, should be supported.

4. Civil society as a dynamic arena

The recent story has not all been about the loss of momentum of the Arab Spring, Occupy and the Indignados, and about crackdowns on civil society. Protests have burst out in other places, such as Bangladesh, Bulgaria and Malaysia, and continue to flare in Greece. Arguably, although it has been met with attempts at repression, in 2012 we saw a renaissance of Russian civil society. A generation that had previously been considered rather passive or consumerist and had not before engaged in politics or civil society led the movement to push back on Putin's repression. As noted earlier, in India, the anti-corruption campaign is offered as an example of a broad-based alliance and movement that achieved impact, while at the end of 2012 India also saw spontaneous responses against sexual harassment and for the dignity of women, and a strong anti-nuclear movement in Tamil Nadu. In March 2013, online campaign platform Avaaz announced its 20 millionth member.

Civil society as complex, dynamic arena

The civil society arena is dynamic and different forms of civil society experience the enabling environment in different ways. It would be difficult, and perhaps wrong, to try to encompass them all in one initiative. Our contribution from Brazil hints at the complexity of the civil society universe by pointing out that cooperatives did not fit into new proposals for more progressive regulatory reform in that context because they are not non-profits. The emergence of forms such as social enterprises, and the difficulty some CSOs experience in accepting and relating to these hybrid forms, challenges old notions of civil society that appear hung up on organisational forms and whether organisations make profits.

Our contribution from the Global Fund for Community Foundations notes that community foundations – essentially, groupings that manage local philanthropic funds to help address social improvement needs – are often overlooked as part of civil society, and yet they enjoy crucial assets, such as their standing in the community and the role they play as builders of trust and social capital. What we should be encouraged to see in community foundations is the application of a local assets-based approach that works with what is available from the ground up. With increasing hybridisation of civil society forms, we suggest that we should accept that each civil society form is capable of utilising different assets and makes a contribution in different ways.

An understanding that the civil society arena is fluid and dynamic offers both a hope for and a challenge to our understanding of the enabling environment. New civil society forms evolve to fill emerging social, political and economic spaces as governments and private sector shift ground, leave gaps, or are found to fail communities. Sometimes established CSOs ossify or get left behind by events, including in countries that have undergone sudden, dramatic transitions. Where conventional CSOs are weak or the environment for them is highly disenabling, informal groups, community foundations and other such civil society forms may offer alternate spaces for voluntary action, as our contributor from the Global Fund for Community Foundations suggests:

"CSOs in many countries are witnessing restrictions in their space to undertake their work as independent development actors, resulting from constraining government policies, regulations and political harassment, and the impact of onerous conditions attached to official donor aid. In this context, new community philanthropy institutions may be seen as part of a fresh wave of community level organisations, which are contributing to a more enabling environment for local CSOs and community initiative. They are doing so through helping to develop more inclusive and democratic decision-making processes, and greater harnessing of local assets and resources, rather than a reliance on ideas, money and initiative from outside."

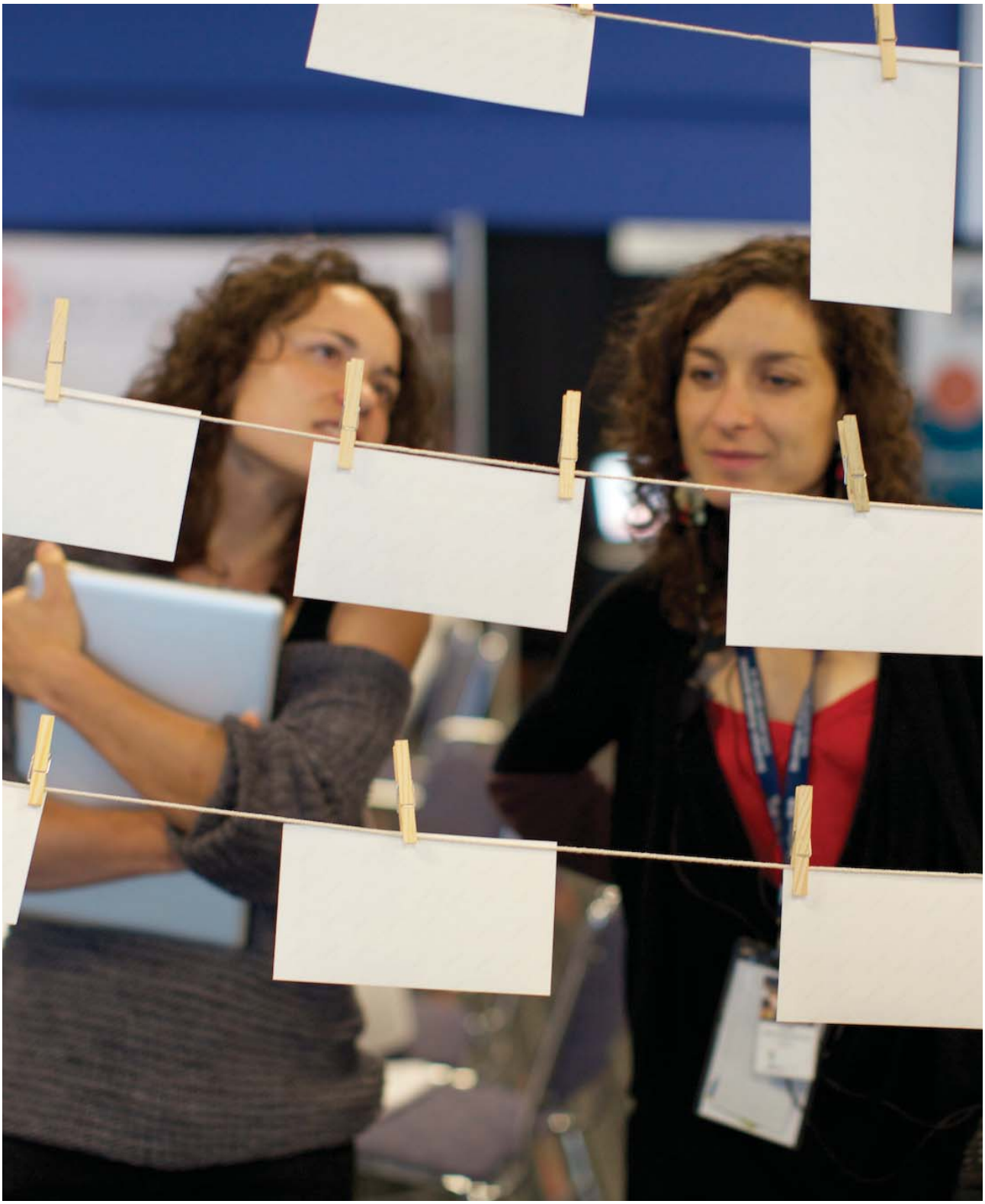
Given this, it is essential that standards for the enabling environment for civil society, as suggested by our recommendations throughout this report, are able adequately to capture or encompass new forms, rapid evolutions and the civil society activity that goes on under the radar in what may otherwise seem disenabling contexts. Standards for the enabling environment need to be capable of responding to changes in the civil society universe. Further, however important the legal, regulatory, policy spheres are for defining the environment for civil society, we also need to seek to improve the other areas outlined in our report, and to look beyond enabling of CSOs to consider wider civil society.

Further, we must resist any definition of civil society or of our enabling conditions set by government regulations and external agencies, however progressive these may be; any such definition is likely to become behind the times, and civil society itself must own and offer its own definitions.

Crisis and crossroads?

It could be argued that there is a crisis in civil society. Many CSOs will feel that they face difficult, existential questions, include those of what they fundamentally stand for, what change they seek, and whether their methods are still the best ones. Other key questions include those of how civil society maintains its autonomy in the face of current global political dynamics, and how we in civil society can ensure we continue to offer added value without becoming used as an instrument.

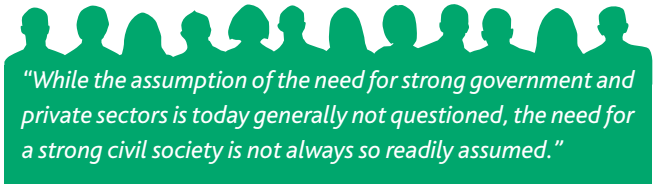
Perhaps a better question to ask is whether civil society has ever not been in a crisis, a state of flux, or seeing itself stood at a crossroads? Perhaps we should start to recognise this as healthy and begin to understand volatility, flux and self-criticism as key attributes of civil society that enable it to be a trusted, diverse and self-critical source of alternatives and solutions, and a locus for self-expression, dialogue and the pursuit of public good.



5. Looking forward

As civil society, we have an uphill battle to fight. We know we have impact, even though sometimes we struggle to prove it. Our progressive voices build social cohesion, trust, tolerance, civic participation and cooperation. We provide solutions, results, innovations and ideas. We deliver development. We know that we enrich the daily lives of people and help empower the poor, vulnerable and marginalised. We know that in turn we have a right to the optimal legal, political and social environment, the communications infrastructure and financial conditions that enable us to do our work as well as we can.

The unfortunate reality may be that sometimes we are so close to our work that we cannot see that its value is not clear to all. The value that civil society brings always needs to be proved, documented and promoted – and the argument for civil society continually made. As contributors Jacqueline Wood and Karin Fällman state:



"While the assumption of the need for strong government and private sectors is today generally not questioned, the need for a strong civil society is not always so readily assumed."

Similarly, the value resulting to society as a whole of a more enabling environment for civil society still needs to be demonstrated by civil society in many different contexts. CSOs and individuals in civil society, in their full diversity, need to help reveal the essential value of civil society and people's participation. We must encourage governments, donors, the public and civil society ourselves to expand perceptions of civil society, in order to truly understand and acknowledge civil society's social, political and economic impact. We also have to take all possible steps to be effective and strengthen our collective accountability, thereby making a strong case for a more enabling environment.

In working in this area, we in civil society must be honest, be prepared to admit our failures, and be leaders of best practice. At the same time, we must promote the intrinsic value of civil society, beyond its instrumental value, and we must be confident in asserting our autonomy and our right to make our own definitions, including of the enabling environment. We need to redefine the terms of the debate and not let governments and donors define these for us. Nor must we let ourselves be defensively defined by our reactions to our critics. Our autonomy also implies that we need to improve our research capacities and develop our own data, and to liberate ourselves from our current funding models. These are steps towards our empowerment and developing the enabling environment we deserve.

The enabling environment is necessarily complex and dynamic, and we need to accept that it is this way, and not try to build rigid models. We need to acknowledge nuance, complexity and context-specific dynamics, and affirm the value of local knowledge and local action. But we also need to simplify when possible by prioritising our actions, and by looking for areas of gain and opportunity, and the possibilities for collaboration, which may be different in each context. We need to identify and work to build on our existing assets and search for emerging opportunities and tipping points. Above all, we must work collaboratively, and encompass different civil society forms, including new ones as they arise, and act in solidarity. In doing so we will prove the value, and values, of civil society as a whole.

Collaborative strategies

In closing, we suggest the following as collaborative strategies for civil society that will help us take the next steps forward:

1. We should identify and share successful and innovative practices pioneered by civil society, governments, donors and the private sector that improve the conditions for civil society, and in doing so, improve society as a whole.

2. We should recognise that as civil society we have a key role to play in helping to establish our enabling environment. We should work together to nurture the internal conditions that give civil society the best possible grounds to seek a more enabling environment, such as enhancing our legitimacy, transparency and accountability; strengthening the connections and cooperation between different forms of civil society; adopting effective tools of communication; and demonstrating our impact and our intrinsic, autonomous value.

3. We should be strategic. We need to focus on levers and key moments during which we can exercise pressure, and when due to external factors such as reputational risk, governments and donors will be more amenable to our demands.

4. We should mobilise multi-stakeholder networks of like-minded civil society actors and friendly governments and donors in our efforts to lobby for the implementation of legislative reform and optimal funding and political conditions for civil society.

5. We should forge civil society coalitions that work at a range of levels and that utilise the different strengths of different partners. These should combine the strengths some have

within their countries with the strengths others have in the multilateral arena, and should utilise the assets, including the constituencies and reach, of different civil society forms.

6. Finally, we should acknowledge that we still have to win arguments. In making our arguments, we need to be more ambitious, and to aim higher. We need to drive up standards, and set ever-rising minimum standards and norms.

We believe the time is ripe to seek enabling conditions for civil society: partly because we see some momentum around political acceptance of the importance of improving civil society conditions, not least in international development effectiveness processes; and partly because we see there is a need, with too many examples being offered by our contributors of disenabling conditions. The external environment within which we in civil society seek to make change is influenced by many forces, and in multiple ways disenabling conditions are affecting our abilities to achieve our maximum contributions. It is time to demand more, so that we can achieve more.

Endnotes

1 A series of civil society consultations conducted as part the Commonwealth Foundation's Breaking Point project on civil society experiences of the Millennium Development Goals, held in collaboration with CIVICUS in late 2012 and early 2013, suggested that there have been recent fall backs in poverty reduction and worsened access to development outcomes as a result of economic downturn and changing government and donor priorities in response.

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Photo credits

Front cover (clockwise) Young Tunisian boy at protest in 2012. Source: Aya Chebbi; Policeman with a flower a protest in Murcia. Source: Sergio Reyes; A musician plays traditional African music during the closing ceremony of RECAMP V in Douala, Cameroon. Source: U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jason T. Bailey; Photo of a girl at a protest in Canada. Source: Salima Punjani; Dominic Champagne of the Mohawk Nation welcomes participants to the 2012 CIVICUS World Assembly in Montreal, Canada on September 5th, 2012. Source: Tristan Brand.

Page 4 – (Right) Headshot of Baroness Cathy Ashton speaking at the World Economic Forum, Source: Wikicommons; (Left) Inside the European Parliament in Brussels, Source: Wikicommons

Page 5 – (Right) Headshot of Jay Naidoo, Source: GAIN; (Left) Agriculturalists in Nigeria. Source: USAID Africa Bureau

Page 7 – (Right) Headshot of Danny Sriskandarajah, Source: CIVICUS; (Left) Protest against the treatment of the Falun Gong in China, Source: Long Trek Home via Wikicommons.

Page 16 – Shahbag Protests at Projonmo Square in Bangladesh, Source: Mehdi Hasan Khan via Wikicommons

Page 21 – Photo of Flags. Source: Salima Punjani

Page 22 – Guy Fawkes mask at 22 May 2012 protest in Canada, Source: Justin Ling

Page 28 – Montreal protests, Source: Chicoutimi.

Page 34 – Civilian confronting police at protest at the Majlis, Source - Dying regime via Wikicommons

Page 43 – Assisted Networking Activity at the CIVICUS World Assembly 2012, Source: Tristan Brand

Page 45 – Adivasi women in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India, at the beginning of January Satyagraha 2012, Source: Yann via Wikicommons

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